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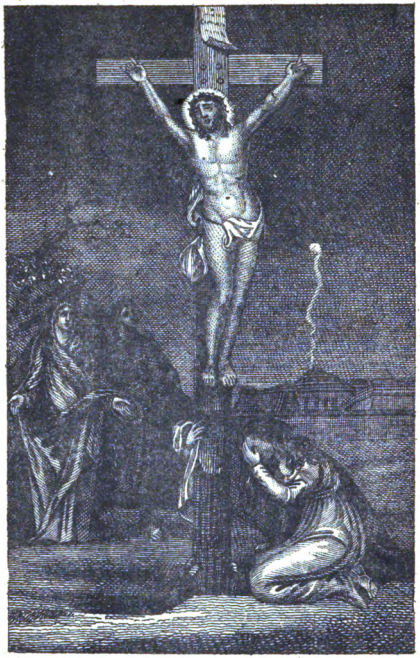

W.H.M.DOWALL Sc.

THE CRUCIFIXION

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary there they Crucified him there"

ST. LUKE. CHAP. XXIII. Ver 33.

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THE

LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

REDUCED TO PRACTICE:

FROM THE WORDS OF ST. PAUL: CHARITY IS PATIENT—IT IS KIND, &c.—1 Cor. xiii. 4.

ADDRESSED TO THOSE SOULS THAT ARE ANXIOUS TO SECURE THEIR ETERNAL SALVATION, AND TO ADVANCE TOWARDS PERFECTION.

BY

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.

Translated into English

BY A CATHOLIC PRIEST.

If any one will not Love our Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed.
St. Paul.

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TO

JESUS CHRIST,

THE GOD OF LOVE, WHO LOVED US, AND DELIVERED HIMSELF UP FOR US;

WHO CAME TO CAST THE FIRE OF DIVINE LOVE ON EARTH;

AND WHOSE ONLY DESIRE IS TO SEE IT ENKINDLED IN THE HEARTS OF MEN;

WHO HAVING LOVED HIS OWN WHO WERE IN THE WORLD, LOVED THEM TO THE END;

GREATER LOVE THAN WHOM NO MAN HATH,

BECAUSE HE LAID DOWN HIS OWN LIFE,

NOT ONLY FOR HIS FRIENDS, BUT FOR HIS ENEMIES,

The following Translation

IS WITH THE MOST PROFOUND HUMILITY, REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE,

DEDICATED AND INSCRIBED.

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THE LOVE

OF

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

REDUCED TO PRACTICE.

CHAPTER I.

How Jesus Christ deserves to be loved, on account of the love which he has shewn us in his Passion.

1. ALL sanctity and perfection consist in loving Jesus Christ, our God, our sovereign Good, and our Saviour. He who loves me, says Jesus Christ, will be loved by my Father. *My Father loves you, because you have loved me.* (John xvi. 27.) Some, says St. Francis of Sales, makes perfection consist in austerity, others in prayer, others in the frequentation of the sacraments, and others in alms-giving. But they are all deceived—perfection consists in loving God with our whole hearts. Charity, says the apostle, (Coloss. iii. 14.) unites and preserves all the virtues which render a man perfect. *Love God*, says St. Augustine, *and do what you please*, because love will teach you to do nothing that could offend him, but, on the contrary, to do every thing that will please him.

2. And does not God deserve all our love? *He has loved us from all eternity.* (Jer. li. 5.) Children of men, says the Lord, remember that I have

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loved you first. You had not yet been in the world—the world itself did not yet exist, and even then I loved you. As long as I am God I love you, and I have loved you as long as I have loved myself. St. Agnes then had good reason to say, when a husband was proposed to her: *Another has already taken possession of my heart*—no creature can henceforth have any pretensions to it—all my affections belong to my God, who has loved me first, and from all eternity.

3. God, seeing that man was to be gained by kindness, was pleased to load him with favors, in order to obtain his love. For this reason he has said, (Osee xi. 4.) *I will bind man with chains of love.* These chains are the gifts which God has bestowed on man. He has given him a soul created after his own image, endowed with memory, understanding, and will, and a body supplied with senses. It was for the love of man that he created the heavens, the earth, the sea, the mountains, vallies, plains, minerals, vegetables, animals of so many species, in one word—all nature; and, in acknowledgment of so many benefits, he requires from man only his love. O Lord, my God, said St. Augustine, every thing that I behold on the earth, and above the earth, speaks to me, and exhorts me to love you, because every thing tells me that it was created by you for the love of me. The Abbot de Rance, the Reformer of La Trappe, never looked at the hills, the fountains, the birds, the flowers, the planets, or the heavens, without feeling his soul inflamed with the love of God.

4. Whenever St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi beheld a flower, the love of God was enkindled in

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her heart, and she cried out: It was for the love of me that God, from all eternity, resolved to create this flower! This thought was to her a dart of love which penetrated her heart, and united it every day more intimately with God. St. Teresa, at the sight of a tree, a rivulet, a meadow, or a fountain, reproached herself for loving God so faintly, who had created all those beautiful objects to gain her love. A pious solitary, imagining that he heard the same reproaches from the herbs and flowers which he met on his walks, was wont to say to them: You call me an ungrateful creature—you tell me that it was through love for me God has created you, and that, nevertheless, I do not love him. But I understand you—be silent, and do not reproach me any more.

5. God, not content with having created for us so many wonderful things, has done still more, and in order to gain our love, has given us his entire self. The eternal Father has given us his own Son. (John iii. 16.) We were all dead, and deprived of his grace by sin. An excess of love, as the apostle says, induced our God to send us his dearly beloved Son to discharge our debts, and to restore us the life of grace, of which sin had deprived us, (Ephes. ii. 4, 5.) by giving us his Son, that is to say, not sparing his Son, in order to spare us. With this divine Son he has given us all things; (Rom. viii. 32.) his grace, his love, his kingdom, for all these things are incomparably less than his Son.

6. The Son of God was also entirely given to us by love, (Gal. ii. 2.) and in order to redeem us from eternal death, and to restore us the grace and heaven which we had forfeited, *He was made*

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man. (John i. 14.) *He humbled himself.* (Philipp. ii. 7.) The Sovereign of the Universe humbled himself, so as to take the form of a servant, and to subject himself to all human miseries.

7. But what most astonishing is, that he could have saved us without dying, or suffering, and nevertheless, he chose punishments, contempt, a cruel ignominous death, the punishment of the cross, one which was destined only for malefactors. (Philipp. ii. 8.) But why would he, without any necessity, deliver himself up to these torments? It was, because he loved us, and wished to shew us the entire extent of his love, by suffering for us what no one has ever endured.

8. Thus St. Paul, seized with the love of Jesus Christ, said, *The charity of Jesus Christ presses us,* (2 Cor. v. 14.) desiring to shew us by this, that it is not what Jesus Christ has suffered for us, so much as the love which he has displayed for us in his sufferings, that should oblige and almost compel us to love him. On this subject St. Francis of Sales has said: " To know that Jesus Christ has died on the cross for the love of us is sufficient to press our hearts with a love, whose violence is as strong as it is amiable." Let us embrace then the cross, and persevere therein even unto death, with him who has given his life for the love of us. Yes, every one of us should say, I will embrace it, and I will never abandon this cross—I will die there with my God, and I will burn with the fire of his divine love. This sacred fire will consume the Creator, and his miserable creature. My Saviour has given himself entirely to me, and I give myself entirely to him. I desire to live and die on his heart; nothing shall ever

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separate me from him. O Divine Love! my soul desires you, and takes you for its spouse for ever. Holy Spirit inflame my heart with your pure and holy ardours. To love or to die. To die to every other love, in order to live to that of Jesus. O Saviour of our Souls! grant that I may sing for ever: Live Jesus, whom I love! Live Jesus, my love! I love Jesus, who lives for ever and ever!

9. The love which Jesus Christ had for men was so great, that it made him long for the hour of his death in order to display it. He said during his life, I have to be baptized in my own blood, and how long is the hour of my death retarded, when I am to exhibit to man the great love I have for him! (Luke vii. 50.) It was for this reason that St. John, speaking of the night when the passion of our Saviour commenced, says, the Saviour termed this hour, *his own hour*, (John xiii. 1.) because he desired nothing so much as the moment of his death, when he wished to afford men the last proof of his love, by dying for them on a cross, worn away with grief.

10. But what could have induced a God to die on an infamous gibbet, between two thieves, and in a manner so insulting to his Divine Majesty? *It was love*—which, without any regard to the dignity of him who loves, is bent only on displaying it to the object of his love. St. Francis of Paula had therefore good reason to cry out frequently at the sight of a crucifix: O Love! O Love! O Love! Animated by the same spirit we should in imitation of him cry out when we behold Jesus on the cross, O Love! O infinite Love!

11. Who could believe it, if faith had not as-

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sured us, that an all-powerful God, who was supremely happy and master of all things, could have loved man in such a manner as almost to go out of himself for the love of him? To use the expression of St. Laurence Justinian, we have seen wisdom itself, the Eternal Word, become foolish with the excessive love which he bore for men. St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi said the same thing one day, when being in an exstasy, she took a crucifix in her hands and cried out: O my Jesus! your love for me has even made you foolish. Yes, I say it, and always will say it, love has made you foolish. But no, replies St. Denis, the Areopagite: no, it is not foolishness; but it is the property of divine love to induce him who loves, to deliver himself entirely to the object of his love.

12. Oh! if men would only pause and contemplate Jesus on the cross, and the love which he had for each of them, *would they not be enkindled*, said St. Francis of Sales, *at the sight of those flames which consume the Redeemer's heart? What a happiness for them to be able to burn in the same fire with our God! What joy to behold themselves united to God by the chains of love!* St. Bonaventure calls the wounds of Jesus Christ, wounds that wound the most insensible heart, and inflame the most tepid souls. O may darts of love come forth from those wounds to pierce the most obdurate hearts! O may flames issue forth from them to endindle the most tepid! May, in fine, chains proceed from that opened side to bind the most stubborn hearts!

13. The venerable John of Avila, who loved Jesus Christ so tenderly, that in every one of his sermons he never failed to speak of the love of

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Jesus Christ for us, has left us in his treatise on the love of the Redeemer, some passages so touching and beautiful, that I cannot refrain from quoting them.

14. "My Divine Redeemer, you have loved mankind in such a manner, that we cannot think of it without loving you. Your love offers violence to hearts, as the apostle says: *the charity of Jesus Christ presseth us.* This love of Jesus Christ for all men springs from his love for God. Hence, he said, after his last supper, *that the world may know that I love my Father, arise, let us depart.* And whither? To die for men on a cross."

15. "No one can conceive how ardent this fire of love is in the heart of Jesus Christ. If, instead of one death, he had been asked to suffer a thousand, he had sufficient love to do it. If, in place of dying for all men in general, he had been appointed to die for the salvation of one only, he would cheerfully have done it for each, as he has done it for all. In fine, if, instead of remaining three hours upon the cross, he had to remain there until the day of judgment, his love was so great, that he would have been satisfied, so that the love of Jesus Christ was far greater than his sufferings. O divine love! how much more ardent you are than you seem to be exteriorly! It is true, indeed, that your blood and wounds exhibit a great love; but they do not shew us its entire extent. These exterior signs are feint, indeed, when compared with that immense fire of love, which burns you within. The greatest mark of love is to give one's life for his friends; but this mark was not sufficient to express all the love of Jesus Christ."

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16. It is this love that ravishes Christian souls, and transports them out of themselves. From hence spring lively ardours, the desire of martyrdom, joy in suffering, a thirst for torments, and for every thing which the world fears and abhors. St. Ambrose says, that the true Christian looks upon it as his whole glory to bear upon his person the marks of the cross.

17. In what manner, O my God, shall I be able to repay you for so great a love? It is right that blood should be compensated by blood; have I then the courage to spill my blood upon the cross, which I embrace? O holy cross, receive me into your arms! Crown of thorns be increased in size, that I may be able to place my head next to that of my Saviour! And you, O too cruel nails! come forth from the innocent hands of my God, come and wound my hands with compunction and love. You have died, O my Saviour, says St. Paul, to reign over the living and the dead, not by terror, but by love. Rom. xiv. 9.

18. " The fire of your love which has ravished hearts, has also broken the hardness of ours, O my God! You have set the whole world on fire with your love. Inebriate our hearts also with this precious wine; inflame them with this sacred fire, wound them with this wholesome dart of your love. Your cross is the mistress of hearts. May all the world know that mine is entirely obedient to it. O my Jesus! my Love! what have you done? You came to heal me, and you have wounded me! You came to teach me to live well, and you have rendered me almost foolish! Happy and most wise folly! will I be able to preserve you during my whole life! Lord, every thing that I see on

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the cross invites me to love you; the wood, the figure, the wounds of your body, and particularly your love: all invite me to love you, and never to forget you."

19. But in order to arrive at the perfect love of Jesus Christ, we must adopt the necessary means. Those are, according to St. Thomas, (Epist. de Dilect, Dei. § 1.) First, to have his benefits, both in general and particular, continually present to our minds: Secondly, to consider the infinite goodness of God, who is always engaged in doing us good; who loves us without ceasing, and wishes to be loved by us: Thirdly, to avoid with the greatest care the least thing that could offend him: Fourthly, to renounce all temporal goods, such as riches, honours, and sensual delights. Thauler adds, the meditation on the passion as a powerful means for obtaining the love of Jesus Christ.

20. The devotion to the passion of Jesus Christ is the most useful and effectual of all devotions; it is most agreeable to God, that which affords sinners most consolation, and which inspires most love. From what source could we derive all these blessings unless from the passion of our Saviour? From whence do we derive the hope of pardon, strength in temptations, a confidence of gaining heaven, so many lights, so many loving invitations, so many desires of conversion, but from the passion of the Saviour? The apostle then had good reason to declare accursed, whosoever did not love the Lord Jesus Christ. Cor. xxi. 22.

21. St. Bonaventure says, that there is no devotion more capable of sanctifying the soul than meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ, and he

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recommends us to meditate upon it every day, if we wish to advance in the love of God. St. Augustine assures us, that we derive more merit from shedding one tear at the remembrance of the passion, than we would from continual fasting on bread and water. It was for this reason the saints were always employed in thinking on the passion of the Lord. St. Francis of Assisium became a seraph by this means; having shed warm tears one day, he was asked the cause. *I weep*, replied the Saint, *over the sufferings and ignominies of my Saviour, and what afflicts me most is, that men for whom he has suffered so much, do not think of it.* At these words, his tears encreased so rapidly, that the person who asked him the question began to weep also. The bleating of a lamb, or any thing else that recalled to his mind the passion of our Lord, was sufficient to make him shed tears. He was advised one day that he was sick, to read some pious book.. *My book*, said he, *is Jesus crucified.* Hence, he continually exhorted his religious to meditate always on the passion. Whoever will not burn with the love of God, when he contemplates Jesus on the cross, will never love.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Eternal Word! divine Jesus! you have spent thirty-three years in labours and sufferings, you have given your blood and your life, in order to save all men; in a word, you have left no means untried to make yourself loved by them; how can it be possible that there are men who know this, and who do not love you? Yet there are such

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ingrates, and I am one of the number. I am sorry for it, O my Jesus! take pity on me, and receive my heart as a reparation for the injuries, which I have offered you. I present it to you, O my God! it has been ungrateful, but it is now repentant. Yes, above all other things, I am sorry for having despised you. I repent of it, and I love you with my whole soul. O my soul! love a God, who is bound like a criminal—a God, who is scourged, who is derided and fastened on the cross for your salvation. Yes, my Saviour, and my God, I love you, and I wish to love you for ever. Recall to my mind every day all that you have suffered for me, that I may never forget to love you. O sacred cords, which bound Jesus, my Saviour, unite me closely to Jesus; thorns which crowned his adorable head, wound me with love for my Jesus; venerable nails, which pierced Jesus, fasten me to the cross, that I may live and die united to Jesus; precious blood of Jesus, inebriate me with divine love; death of Jesus, make me die to every earthly affection. Feet of my Saviour, I embrace you; deliver me from hell, which I have deserved. In hell I could not love you any more, O my sweet Jesus! and yet I wish to love you for ever. My amiable Redeemer, save me; unite me closely to you, and do not permit me to be ever separated from you. And you, O Mary! refuge of sinners, mother of my Saviour, assist a sinner, who desires to love his God, and who recommends himself to your intercession. I conjure you by the love which you have for Jesus to assist me.

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CHAPTER II.

How Jesus Christ deserves to be loved by us, on account of the love which he has shewn us in the institution of the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

1. The Saviour knowing that his time was come, (John xxiii. 1.) wished to leave us before his death, the greatest possible proof of his love, and hence he instituted the most holy sacrament of the altar. St. Bernardin of Sienna observes, that those marks of love which are bestowed in death, make a greater impression upon the heart, and are esteemed much more valuable than others; and for this reason, we generally bequeath at the hour of death, to our dearest friends, some token, as a memorial of the attachment we have had for them. But you, O my Jesus! when you were about to leave this world, what would you leave us in memory of your love? You have given us yourself: you have left us your body, your blood, your soul, your divinity—in a word, your entire self without any reserve.

2. In this sacrament, says the Council of Trent, (Sess. xiii. 9.) Jesus Christ has poured forth for us all the riches of his love; and as the apostle remarks, he bestowed this gift on men, the very night when they were betraying him to death. (1 Cor. xi. 23, 24.) The Saviour, in his excessive love for us, not being satisfied with preparing to die for our salvation, wished also before his death, to do something greater for us, by giving us his body for our food. St. Bernard, Serm. 54.

3. Justly, therefore, does St. Thomas call this sacrament *the sacrament of love*, because nothing

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but love induced Jesus Christ to give us his entire self; and *the pledge of love*, in order that if we should have any doubt of his love, we might find a pledge of it in this sacrament, as if the Redeemer had said at his institution: Christian souls, if you doubt of my love, consider this sacrament in which I give you myself entirely; with such a pledge in your hand, you cannot doubt that I love you, and that I love your dearly. St. Bernard calls this sacrament *the love of loves*, because this gift comprises all the other benefits of the Lord, those of creation, redemption, and predestination to glory; for the eucharist is not only a proof of the love of Jesus Christ, but it is also a pledge of future glory, which he wishes to bestow us, says the church. It was for this reason, St. Philip Neri knew no other name by which to call Jesus Christ in this sacrament but that of *love*, and when the holy viaticum was brought to him, he cried out: "*Behold my love: give me my love.*"

4. The Prophet Isaias was anxious to manifest to the whole world, those inventions of love on the part of God, in order to make himself loved by men. Who could have thought that the Incarnate Word would have concealed himself under the appearance of bread, in order to become our food? What, says St. Augustine, does it not seem foolish to say, "*Eat my flesh, and drink my blood?*" The first time Jesus Christ spoke of this sacrament to his disciples, they could not believe him, and they withdrew from him, saying, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" (John vi. 16.) Now, that which men could neither conceive nor believe, has been conceived and acccomplished by the exceeding love of Jesus Christ.

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Take and eat, said he to his disciples, and in their name, to us all. But what food do you wish to give us, O Saviour of the world before you die? It is my body; it is no earthly nourishment—it is myself, and I give you my entire self.

5. What desire did not Jesus Christ feel to bestow us himself in the holy communion? (Luke xxii. 15.) I have ardently desired to eat this pasch with you, said he, on the night he instituted this sacrament of love: words, which, as St. Laurence Justinian observes, clearly prove the immense love which he bore us. In order that every one might easily receive him, he chose the appearance of bread. If he had given himself under the appearance of some rare and costly food, the poor would have been deprived of him; but Jesus wished to bestow himself under the species of bread, because it costs little, is found every where, and renders the frequentation of the sacrament easy.

6. In order to inflame us with the desire of receiving him in the holy communion, he not only earnestly exhorts us, (come my friends, eat and drink, Prov. ix. 5, as he says, when speaking of this bread, and heavenly wine,) but also gives us a formal precept, Take and eat. He invites us, by promising us heaven. He that eats my flesh, hath eternal life. (John vi. 55, 58.) In fine, he threatens with hell those who will not receive it. (Ibid. 54.) All these invitations, promises and threats sprung from the great desire which he had of giving us himself in the holy sacrament of the altar.

7. But why should Jesus so ardently desire that we should receive him in holy communion?

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It is because love always sighs for, and tends to an union with the object beloved. True friends wish to be united in such a manner as to become only one. The love of God for us being immense, he destined us to possess him not only in heaven, but also here below, by the most intimate union, under the appearance of bread in the Eucharist. It is true we do not see him; but he beholds us, and is really present; yes, he is present in order that we may possess him, and he conceals himself, that we may desire him, and until the period when we shall arrive at our true country, Jesus Christ wishes to be entirely ours, and to be perfectly united to us.

8. The love of Jesus Christ did not think it enough to become man, and to die for all men; his love induced him also to discover a means by which he might give himself entirely to each of us, and it was for this reason that he instituted the holy sacrament of the altar. (John vi.) In the holy communion Jesus unites himself to the soul, and the soul is united to Jesus, and this union is not merely one of pure affection, it is true and real. St. Francis of Sales thus expresses himself on this subject: The Saviour has in no instance shewn himself more tender or more loving than in this sacrament, where he is, if I may say so, annihilated, and reduces himself to food, in order to penetrate souls, and unite himself to the heart of the faithful. Jesus Christ in the ardour of his love for us, desired to be united to us in such a manner, that we should become one and the same substance with him. St. Chrysost. Hom. 61.

9. O Divine Spouse of our souls! criest out St. Laurence Justinian, you wished by this sacrament

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of love, that your heart and ours should be inseparably united, and form but one heart; to which St. Bernardine of Sienna adds: Jesus Christ in giving himself to us under the appearance of food, has completed his love, as he gave himself thus, in order to be entirely united to us, and in the same manner that food is united to him who eats it. (Tom. ii. Serm. 54.) Oh, how Jesus Christ delights to be united to our souls! He said one day after communion, to his faithful servant, Margaret of Ipres, Behold my daughter, the delightful union that exists between me and thee. Love me then: let us be always united by love, and let us never separate any more.

10. We can, therefore, do nothing more agreeable to Jesus Christ, than to go to communion with the dispositions suitable to so great an action. Since we are then united to Jesus Christ, according to the desire of this all-loving God. I have said *with suitable* and not *worthy* disposition, for who could communicate, if it was necessary to be worthy of so great a Saviour? No one but a God would be worthy to receive a God. But by this word suitable, or convenient, I mean such a disposition as becomes a miserable creature, who is clothed with the unhappy flesh of Adam. Ordinarily speaking, it is sufficient that we communicate in a state of grace and with an anxious desire of advancing in the love of Jesus Christ. It is by love alone we should receive Jesus Christ in the holy communion, says St. Francis of Sales, as it is through love alone that he gives himself to us. But at what time, or how often should we communicate? I answer, that in this matter, we should follow the advice of our spiritual Father.

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Moreover, we should be aware that no lawful state, nor marriage, nor business is an obstacle to frequent communion, when our confessor deems it advisable, as Pope Innocent XI. has expressly declared in his decree of the year 1679.

11. Nothing in the world could be so profitable as communion. The Eternal Father has put Jesus Christ in possession of all his riches. (John xiii. 3.) Hence, when Jesus comes into a soul by the holy communion, he brings with him the immense treasures of his graces, so that one may say after communion, "All good things have come to me together with it." (Wisdom vii. 11.) St. Denis shews that the sacrament of the Eucharist is the most powerful means for sanctifying souls. St. Vincent Ferrer declares, that we derive more advantage from one communion, than from fasting for a week on bread and water.

12. Communion, says the Council of Trent, delivers us from venial faults, and preserves us from mortal sins. (Sess. xiii. 2.) We are delivered from venial faults, (St. Thomas 3. p. 79. a 4.) because by means of this sacrament, man is excited to form acts of love which efface venial sins: we are preserved from mortal sin, because communion bestows an increase of grace, which preserves us from grievous faults. It is for this reason, Innocent III. says, that by his passion, Jesus Christ has withdrawn us from the power of sin, but that by the Eucharist he delivers us from the power of sinning.

13. This sacrament above all others, inflames our souls with divine love. *God is love.* (1 John iv. 8.) He is a fire which consumes every thing

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earthly in our hearts. (Deut. iv. 24.) Now Jesus Christ came to bring this fire of love upon earth, and he desires nothing so much as to enkindle it in our souls. (Luke xii. 49.) What flames of divine love will he not therefore light up in the heart of him who receives him by communion? St. Catherine of Sienna, at the elevation of the host, one day saw Jesus in the form of a globe of fire, and she could not conceive why the hearts of all mankind did not burn, and were not consumed by this divine fire. St. Rose of Lima's countenance, after communion, was radient with light. St. Chrysostom says, that communion inflames us with divine love, in such a manner, that after we come from the holy table, we become objects of terror to hell itself. Hom. 61.

14. So great a love may be excited in the soul by communion, as that she should forget herself, and lose sight of all created things. But, one may say: I communicate seldom, because I feel my love for God is very imperfect. What, replies Gerson, is it because you feel cold, that you will run away from fire? Ah! you should rather on account of your coldness, often approach this sacrament, if you desire really to love Jesus Christ; the more sick a person is, the more he requires a physician. (St. Bernard de Profes. Relig. c. 78.) St. Francis of Sales in the 21st chapter of his *Introduction*, tells us, that there are two kinds of persons who should communicate often: the perfect, in order to keep themselves in perfection, and the imperfect in order to attain to perfection. But in order to communicate frequently, we should at least have a great desire of becoming

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holy, and of always increasing in the love of Jesus Christ. Whenever you go to communion, said Jesus to St. Mectilda, desire to have for me all the love of which a heart is capable, and I will receive this love such as you would wish it to be.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

God of love, amiable Jesus, worthy of infinite love, tell me what more can you do, to make yourself loved by us? You were not content with having become man, and subjected yourself to miseries like ours; it was not enough for you to have shed your entire blood for us, in the midst of torments, and to die exhausted with suffering on a cross, which was destined only for the greatest malefactors: you also wished to conceal yourself under the appearance of bread, in order to become our food, and be united to each of us. Tell me, I repeat, what more could you invent, to make yourself loved by us? Ah! woe be to us, if we do not love you in this world! What remorses should we not feel during eternity, for not having loved you? My sweet Jesus, I do not wish to die without loving you, and loving you dearly. I feel extreme grief, for having so grievously offended you; I am sorry for it, and I wish to die of grief. Yes, I now love you above all things; I love you more than myself, and I consecrate all my affections to you. It is from you I derive so good a disposition; grant me also strength to correspond with it, Jesus, my sweet Jesus, you alone are sufficient for me; now that you have attracted me to love you, I renounce every thing, in order to adhere to you alone; you alone are sufficient for me. Mary,

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Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me, that he may render me holy. Cannot you, who perform so many prodigies, accomplish that which transforms sinners into saints?

CHAPTER III.

On the great confidence which we should derive from the consideration of the love which Jesus Christ has shewn us, and of all his benefits.

1. Before the Saviour had appeared upon earth David had already placed all his confidence in him, and said to him: *Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth.* (Ps. xxx. 6.) With how much greater reason should not we confide in Jesus Christ, we who know that he has come and accomplished the work of redemption? Let us then speak to him with more confidence, and incessantly repeat the words of the prophet.

2. If our sins give us every reason to fear eternal death, the merits of Jesus Christ afford us much stronger grounds for confidence. These merits are infinite, and incomparably more powerful to save us, than our sins are to destroy us. By sinning we have deserved hell, but the Redeemer has come to charge himself with all our crimes, and to expiate them by his sufferings. Isaias liii. 4.

3. At the moment we committed sin God wrote down the sentence of our condemnation to eternal death. But what did Jesus Christ? He took this sentence, fastened it to his cross, (Coloss. ii. 14.) and blotted it out with his own blood, in

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order that we should never think of our condemnation without looking at the cross on which Jesus has destroyed this decree, and thus conceiving hopes of pardon and of eternal salvation.

4. Oh! how much more powerful is not the blood of Jesus Christ to obtain mercy for us from God than the blood of Abel was to accuse Cain! (Heb. xii. 24.) How happy you are, poor sinners, to be able to have recourse to Jesus crucified, who has poured out all his blood, to render himself a mediator of peace between God and sinners, and to obtain for them the pardon of their crimes! Your iniquities, it is true, cry out for vengeance against you; but the precious blood of the Redeemer pleads in your favour, and the divine justice it necessarily appeased by the voice of this precious blood.

5. We have, I admit, a rigorous account to give of our sins; but who will be our judge? (John v. 22.) Let us be comforted; it is the Redeemer himself whom God has appointed to judge us. Thus St. Paul encourages us, saying, (Rom. viii. 34.) Who is the judge that is to condemn us? It is the Saviour himself, who, in order that he should not condemn us to eternal death, has condemned himself to death for our sake, and who, not content with this benefit, still continues to intercede for us in heaven with God his Father. What do you fear sinners, says St. Thomas of Villanova, if you detest your sins, how can he condemn, who died that he might not condemn you? How can he reject you, if you return to his feet, he who came down from heaven to seek you, when you were flying from him?

6. Our weakness makes us tremble, lest we

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should yield to future temptations. Behold the remedy pointed out by the apostle. (Heb. xii. 2.) Let us go to the combat with our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ crucified, who from the summit of his cross, offers us his assistance, victory, and reward. If we have fallen, during our past life, it is because we have neglected to consider the wounds and the ignominies of the Redeemer, and to ask assistance from him. But if henceforth we think of all he has suffered for the love of us, and of his anxiety to assist us when we have recourse to him, we will not assuredly, be overcome by our enemies. St. Teresa said: I cannot conceive how one can fear the devil so much, since we have only to invoke the holy name of God to make him tremble. But she also said: All our efforts will avail nothing, if we do not renounce all confidence in ourselves, and place it in God alone.

7. We have in the passion, and in the holy sacrament of the altar, two great mysteries of hope and love; mysteries which we could not believe, unless we were assured of them by faith. What! an all-powerful God to become man, to shed all his blood, and to expire in torment on an infamous gibbet! For what purpose? To expiate our sins, to save us, worms of the earth, and rebels against his divine Majesty! This is still but little: to wish to give us this very body that was sacrificed on the cross, as our food, in order that he might be thus entirely united to us! Great God! these two mysteries ought to inflame and consume with love the hearts of all men. Where is the sinner, howsoever criminal, that can despair of his pardon, if he repent of his sins, when he beholds a God so full of love for men, and so inclined to

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do them good? This is what inspired St. Bonaventure with so much confidence, when he said: How can he who has done and suffered so much for my salvation, refuse me the necessary graces?

8. *Let us go then with confidence to the throne of grace*, in order to obtain there mercy. (Heb. iv. 16.) The throne of grace is the cross on which Jesus Christ sits, as it were on a throne, to distribute his graces and mercies to all who shall have recourse to him. But we should hasten to it more speedily, now that we have it in our power to find there the necessary helps for salvation: perhaps if we delay longer we shall have no more time to obtain them. Let us, then, hasten to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ, let us go thither with great confidence. Let us not be prevented by the sight of our sins; we will find in Jesus Christ all riches and all graces; (1 Cor. 7.) his mercies has opened for us the treasures of God, by giving us a right to all the graces of which we stand in need.

9. The death of Jesus Christ, has conferred advantages upon us much more cousiderable than the injuries which the devil has caused to be inflicted on us by sin. (S. Leo. Serm. 1. de Ascens.) This agrees with the saying of the apostle: *Where sin hath abounded, grace did more abound.* (Rom. v. 15, 20.) Why then should we not hope to obtain every thing by virtue of the merits of the Saviour? Himself has assured us, that every thing we ask from God his Father in his name, will be granted to us. (John xv. 23.) How can the divine Father refuse us any thing, he who has giving us his only Son, whom he loved as dearly as himself? (Rom. viii. 32.) The apostle says. that with him he has given us all things;

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no grace, therefore is excepted, nor pardon, nor perseverance, nor divine love, nor perfection, nor heaven. But we must pray. God is full of bounty to those who invoke him. Rom. x. 12.

10 In order to excite that confidence which we ought to have in the merits of Jesus Christ, I will cite some beautiful passages extracted from the letters of the venerable Father Avila:

11. " Do not forget that between the Eternal Father and us, there is a Mediator, Jesus Christ, to whom we are united by such strong chains of love, that nothing can break them, if man himself do not break them by mortal sin. The blood of Jesus Christ cries out for mercy for us; and, its cry is so strong, that the noise of our sins is not heard. The death of Jesus Christ has washed away all our crimes. O death, I will be thy death. (Osee.) We will not be lost for want of atonement, but for the want of profiting through the sacraments of the satisfaction of Jesus Christ."

12. " Jesus Christ assumed the charge of repairing our evils, as if it were an affair which was properly his own; he has taken upon him our sins, as if they were his own; he has asked forgiveness of them from God, and he has besought him with as much love as if he were praying for himself, to love all those who wished to approach him. God, on account of his prayers, has granted that Jesus and we should be so united, that we should have to undergo one and the same fate, even of love or hatred; and as Jesus Christ is not and cannot be hated, so if we remain united to him by love, we will be also loved: for Jesus Christ being loved by God, we are also loved, since he is better able to induce him to love us,

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than we are to compel him to hate us, and because God loves his Son much more than he hates sinners.

13. " Jesus said to his Father: *My Father, I wish that those whom thou hast given me should be where I am.* (John xvii. 24.) Love exceeds hatred. We have received forgiveness, and an assurance founded on the love which God bears us, that we will never be abandoned. Can a mother forget her son?—Well, I assure you, says the Lord, in Isaias (clix. 15.) that even if she should, I will not forget you, because I have you written in my hands. Yes, the Saviour has written us in his hands with his own blood. For this reason let us not be troubled at any thing; every thing is directed by those hands which have been nailed to the cross for us as a testimony of love.

14. " Nothing can give us so much trouble that Jesus Christ will not be able to remove it. If I am terrified by my past sins, by a fear of the future, by the snares which the devils lay for me, I will have recourse to the mercy of my God, who has loved me even unto death, and I will place all my confidence in him. He has undoubtedly a regard for me, since he has given himself entirely for my salvation. O Jesus! assured refuge of all those who seek you in the time of need, divine Shepherd of our souls, who deceive ourselves, if we do not hope in you; when we have a sincere desire of amendment you have said, I am the Lord: do not fear; it is I who afflict and who console you.—I sometims send my servants desolations which resemble a hell; but these are afterwards withdrawn, and I comfort them. I am your advocate: your cause is mine;

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I am your surety, and I have paid all your debts. I am your master, and I have purchased you with my own blood, not for the purpose of forsaking but enriching you, after having been bought at so dear a price. How can I withdraw from him who seeks me—I, who went to meet those who sought me to insult me? I did not turn away my face from him who buffeted it, and shall I turn it away from him who comes to adore me? How can you doubt that I love you, when you see me in the hands of my enemies for your love? Have you ever seen me despise him who loved me, or abandon him who besought me for assistance—I, who go out to search for him, even who does not seek for me?

15. "If you believe that the Eternal Father has given you his Son, believe also that he will give every thing else, which must be undoubtedly less precious than his Son. Do not imagine, then, that Jesus Christ has forgotten you, since as a proof of his love, he has left us the greatest of all pledges, his body and blood; in a word, his entire self, in the holy sacrament of the altar."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O Jesus, my love! what confidence your passion gives me! Can I any longer fear not to receive the pardon of my sins, heaven, and the necessary graces to obtain it, from an all-powerful God, who has given me his entire blood? Ah! my Jesus, my hope, and my love, you would lay down your life, that I should not be lost! I love you, O my Redeemer and my God! I love you above all things. You have given yourself entirely

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to me. I wish also to give myself entirely to you. Accept my desire, my heart, and my love. Once more I love you, and wish to love you for ever. May I never cease to repeat these two words, *I love you*, and may they be the last words of my life, in order that I may continue to love you during all eternity! I love you, and because I love you, I feel a supreme sorrow for having so grievously offended you. Unhappy wretch that I am! It was for the gratification of a moment that I have lost you so often. O infinite good! This thought grieves me more than any other evil; but what comforts me is that you are infinite goodness; you know not how to despise a heart that loves you. Oh! that I am not permitted to die for you as you have died for me, O my divine Redeemer! I confidently hope for my eternal salvation. Grant me perseverance in your love; I desire to ask it incessantly of you. Grant me by the merits of your death the grace of perseverance in prayer. I ask this grace from you also, O Mary, and I hope to obtain it by your intercession.

CHAPTER IV.

On our great obligation to love Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus Christ as God, already deserved our love; but by the love which he has shewn us, he seemed to wish to place us under a necessity of loving him, at least, with a sentiment of gratitude for such an accumulation of benefits. He has loved us greatly, in order that he should be dearly loved by us, said St. Bernard, and before him

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Moses. (Deuter. x. 12.) Could he have given a greater proof of his desire of being loved, than to give us a precept to love him? Deuter. vi. 5.

2. St. Paul declares, that love is the fulfilment of the law. (Rom. xiii. 10.) When we behold a God crucified, who died for the love of us, can we refuse to love him? And what do these thorns, these nails, this cross, these wounds, and this blood proclaim to us, but that we ought to love him, who has loved us to such a degree? Is not one heart too little to love a God who is so lovely? Ah! to requite worthily such a love, another God should die for Jesus Christ. Why then, exclaims St. Francis of Sales, why do we not cast our eyes on Jesus crucified, to die with him on the cross, where he was pleased to die for the love of us? The apostle says, that he died for us, in order that we might no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died for us. 2 Cor. v. 15.

3. We read in Ecclesiasticus: Do not forget your surety, for he has given his life, to atone for the punishment due to your sins. Jesus Christ is pleased that we should often think of his passion, and is greatly afflicted when we do not meditate upon it. Would not he, who was maltreated, buffetted, and cast into prison, for his friend, be afflicted, if this friend, far from making him any acknowledgment, could not bear to hear him spoken of? What satisfaction would he not, on the contrary, experience, if he knew that his friend always spoke of him with tenderness, and returned him a thousand thanks? In like manner, Jesus Christ is delighted to perceive that we remember with gratitude and love, all that he has endured in his passion. Before he came on earth, Jesus

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was the desire of the patriarchs, the prophets, and of all nations; now that he has come, and that we know all he has done and suffered, and that he has even consented to die upon a cross for the love of us, should he not much more justly be the object of all our desires, and all our love?

4. It was for this reason, that Jesus, on the eve of his death, instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, and exhorted us to remember at communion his passion and death. (1 Cor. xi. 24, 26.) Let us conclude from this, how much the Saviour loves those who frequently meditate on his passion, as he has remained upon our altars, in order that we might always think of what he has suffered for us, and every day advance in his love. St. Francis of Sales calls Calvary the *Lover's Mountain.* It is impossible to think of Calvary, without loving Jesus Christ, who died upon it for us.

5. Great God! why do not men love him, who has made so many sacrifices, in order to be loved by them? Before the incarnation of the Word, man might have doubted whether God truly loved him, but can he now have any doubt of it, now that the Son of God has come and died for the love of men? Behold the cross, said St. Thomas of Villanova, think of the cruel torments and death of the Saviour, and then you cannot doubt of his extreme love. St. Bernard says, that the cross and wounds of our Redeemer loudly proclaim his love for us.

6. But that we may more fully understand the means which the Saviour has invented to make himself loved by us, let us consider in detail the great mystery of redemption. As he wished to

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die for our salvation, it would have sufficed that he was destroyed in the massacre of the innocents; but no—he wished to spend thirty-three years before his death in labours and sufferings. To induce us to love him, he shews himself first as a poor little infant, born in a stable; then he was employed in helping and assisting a tradesman; finally, as a criminal, he allowed himself to be punished on a cross. But before he died on a cross, he wished also to endure the severest agony, to pour out an abundant bloody sweat, to be buffetted in Pilate's hall, treated as a mock king, with a reed in his hand, a purple rag on his shoulder, and a crown of thorns on his head. He would be ignominiously led to execution, with the cross on his shoulders, and at length permit himself to be crucified on Calvary. What do you think? Does he deserve to be loved, or not; this God, who has suffered so much, and adopted so many means to engage our love? F. John Rigolue had therefore reason to say: I would willingly spend my whole life in weeping with love for a God, whose love induced him to die for the salvation of mankind.

7. Love, says St. Bernard, is a great, a most precious thing. Solomon called wisdom, or what is the same thing, charity, an infinite treasure, because he who has charity partakes of the friendship of God. (Wisdom vii. 14.) Charity is not only the queen of all virtues, (St. Thomas de Virtut. a. 3.) but wherever she reigns she attracts all other virtues in her train, and regulates them all to unite us more securely with God. It is frequently repeated in the scripture, that God loves him who loves. (Prov. viii. 17. John vi. 16.

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xiv. 23.) Behold the delightful union which charity produces: it unites the soul to God. Love gives us strength to do and suffer every thing for God. (Cant. viii. 16.) There is nothing more difficult, says St. Augustine, as not to be accomplished by love, for love makes us feel no fatigue wheresoever we love.

8. St. Chrysostom tells us what the effects of divine love are in a heart where it reigns; when the love of God takes possession of a soul, it produces in it an insatiable desire of acting for the object of love, so that the severest labours always seem trifling in it eyes; it is always afflicted at doing so little for God, and it would be happy if it were permitted to die for him. It looks upon every thing it does as worthless, for love shews it how much God deserves; it sees how imperfect its actions are, and acknowledges with sorrow and confusion, that every thing it does is too little for so great a master.

9. St. Francis of Sales proves, how those are deceived, who imagine that sanctity consists in any thing but the love of God. Some, says he, make perfection consist in austerity; others in alms; some in prayer, and others in the frequentation of the sacraments. For my part, I know of no other perfection, but that of loving God with our whole heart. The other virtues, without charity, or divine love, are like a heap of stones; all that we then require is, to possess this holy love in perfection, by giving ourselves entirely to God.

10. The Lord said, one day, to St. Teresa: Every thing that is not done to please me, is vanity. Oh! that I could deeply impress this great

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truth on the hearts of all men! One thing only is necessary; yes, it is not necessary to be rich in this world, to gain the esteem of men, to love an easy and comfortable life, to possess dignities, to be ranked amongst the learned; the one thing alone necessary is to love God, and to accomplish all his holy will. It was for that he created us, and preserves us; it is by this means alone we can gain heaven. Place me, said the Lord, as a seal upon your heart, and upon your arm, that you may refer to me all your thoughts, desires, and actions; place me on your heart, that there may be no other love there but mine, and upon your arm, that in every thing you do, you may have no other end but me. (Cant. viii. 6.) In short, we fly on the road to perfection, when we have no other object in our actions, than Jesus Christ crucified, and the desire of pleasing him.

11. We should, therefore, with the greatest care, endeavour to acquire a true love for Jesus Christ. Behold the characters of this love. Love is *timorous;* its only fear is to displease God; it is *generous*, full of confidence in God, and has the courage to undertake every thing for his glory, it is *strong*, it triumphs over passions, over the most violent assaults, and the greatest desolations; it is *obedient*, it immediately follows the voice of God; it is *pure*, it loves God alone, and loves him for the only reason that he deserves to be loved; and is *ardent*, because he wishes to inflame all hearts, and to see them consumed with divine love; it *ravishes* the soul, and make it love, as it were out of itself, so that it seems to be no longer occupied with earthly things, but with loving God alone; it is *unitive*, it closely unites the will

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of the creature with that of its Creator; it *sighs* unceasingly, it fills the soul with the desire of quitting the earth to unite itself perfectly to God in the region of bliss, and there to love him with all its strength.

12. No one has pointed out the marks of true charity, and the manner of practising it, better than St. Paul. Without charity, says he, a man is nothing, and nothing is profitable to him. (1 Cor. xiii.) If one should have faith to remove mountains, as St. Gregory Thaumaturgus did, from one place to another; if he should give all his property to the poor, if he should even cheerfully suffer martyrdom, all this, if done without charity, and the desire of pleasing God, would profit him nothing. St. Paul then tells us, the marks of true charity, and shews us the practice of those virtues that spring from charity. *Charity is patient, it is meek, it is beneficial; charity is not envious, it does not act rashly, it is not puffed up with pride, it is not ambitious; it does not seek its own interest, it is not angry, it thinketh no evil, it does not rejoice at iniquity, but rejoices at the truth; it beareth all things, it believeth all things, it hopeth all things, endureth all things.* We shall now proceed to consider these holy practices, both for the purpose of discerning whether we really have the love we ought to possess for Jesus Christ, and also to know clearly what virtues we should particularly practise, in order to preserve and increase this holy love in us.

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AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Most amiable and most loving heart of my Jesus, woe be to him who loves you not! You have died, O my God, in the midst of the most painful sufferings, for the love of all men; how is it possible that they can live in so great a forgetfulness of your benefits? O excess of love on the part of a God! O inconceivable ingratitude of man! Consider, O men, this Lamb without spot, it is for you he expires on the cross; it is to satisfy the justice of God for your sins, and to attract your love. See how he prays to God his Father, to forgive you. Can you see all this and not love him? Alas! my Saviour, that the number of those who love you is so small! Unhappy creature that I am, how could I spend so many years without thinking of you, and in offending you so many times. My divine Redeemer, I am not so much afflicted on account of the punishment which I have deserved as at the sight of my ingratitude, notwithstanding the love you had for me. Dolours of Jesus, ignominies of Jesus, wounds of Jesus, death of Jesus, love of Jesus, come and penetrate my heart so deeply that it may never forget you, and that you may set it on fire with love! I love you, O my Jesus! I love you, O my sovereign good! I love you, my love and my all; yes, I love you, and I wish to love you for ever. Ah! do not suffer me to abandon you and to lose you. Grant that I may be entirely yours; it is by the merits of your passion and death that I implore this favour. Grant it, O my God; and you, O Mary! my queen, grant

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that I may love Jesus Christ, and you. You can by your intercession, O my mother and my hope! obtain this favor; procure it, therefore, for me.

CHAPTER V.

CHARITY IS PATIENT.

He that loves Jesus Christ, loves sufferings.

1. The earth is a place of merits, and hence it is a place of sufferings. We cannot be perfectly happy but in heaven, our country, and our eternal repose. We spend a very short time in this world, and this very little time is filled with miseries. (Job. xiv. 1.) No one is exempted from suffering something; all men, whether just or sinners, are obliged to carry the cross. He who bears it willingly and patiently, is saved; he who carries it with impatience, is lost. The very same miseries, says St. Augustine, are a means of salvation to some, whilst they cause the damnation of others. He adds, that it is in the sieve of affliction the good grain is separated from the tares, in the church of God. He who humbles himself in tribulations, and is resigned to God's will, is the good grain which is destined for heaven; he, on the contrary, who is proud, impatient, and abandons God, is the chaff destined for hell.

2. On the day of that particular judgment, which will decide our eternal lot, our lives must be found conformable to that of Jesus Christ, in order to be esteemed worthy of glory. (Rom. viii.

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29.) The Word has descended upon the earth to teach us, by his example, to endure with patience the crosses which God sends us. (1 Pet. ii. 21.) Jesus Christ wished to suffer, that he might encourage us in suffering. How many ignominies and sufferings did he not meet during his life? The prophet calls him *the last of men, a man of sorrows:* (Isaias 1. iii. 3.) because the entire life of Jesus Christ was filled with pain and affliction.

3. In the same manner that God has treated his dearly-beloved Son, he still treats those whom he loves, and whom he receives as his children. (Heb. xii. 6.) Jesus Christ said one day to St. Teresa: Know, daughter, that the souls most dear to my Father, are those which suffer most upon earth. Hence, whenever this saint was blessed with affliction, she said she would not change her condition for all the riches of the earth. After her death she appeared to one of her sisters and reveiled to her, that there was a much greater reward in heaven for voluntary sufferings in this life, through the love of God, than for good works; and that if she had any desire to return to earth, it would be in order that she might suffer more for God.

4. He that loves God renders his sufferings doubly meritorious of heaven. St. Vincent of Paul said, that it was a great misfortune not to suffer any thing in this world: and he added, that an individual, or community, which suffered nothing, and was applauded by every one, was on the brink of falling. St. Francis of Assisium thought, that God had nearly forgotten him, on any day that he had nothing to suffer. St. Chrysostom declares, that when God gives any one the

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grace to suffer, he bestows a much greater favour on him than if he had given him power to raise the dead; because in miracles, man is accountable to God; whilst in sufferings, God renders himself accountable to man. He that suffers any thing for God, will be sufficiently rewarded if he receives no other favour than the power of suffering for the God whom he loves. He adds, that he considered it a much greater happiness for St. Paul to be in chains for Jesus Christ, than to be carried up to the third heaven.

5. Nothing is more agreeable in the sight of God than a soul which suffers in patience and peace the crosses which he sends it. Love renders him who loves like to the object of his love. St. Francis of Sales said: all the wounds of our Redeemer are so many mouths, which cry out to us, how much we ought to suffer for him. To suffer constantly for Jesus Christ is the science of the saints; by such suffering we would very speedily become saints. He who loves our Saviour desires to be poor, suffering, and despised as he was. St. John saw all the saints clothed in white with palms in their hands. (Apoc. vii. 9.) Now, the palm is the emblem of martyrdom, and yet all the saints have not been martyred. How comes it then to pass, that they all bear a palm branch? It is, replies St. Gregory, because all the saints have been martyrs, either by the sword, or by the exercise of patience. We all, therefore, have it in our power, and it is also our duty to be martyrs of one kind or the other.

6. All the merit of a soul which loves Jesus Christ consists in loving and suffering. The lord said to St. Teresa: Do you believe, daughter,

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that merit is to be found in consolations? No: it consists in suffering, and in love. Consider my life; it was all filled with sufferings. Yes, daughter, be convinced, that the more a person is loved by my Father, the more crosses he receives. Behold these wounds. Your sufferings will never equal them. It is an error to imagine that any one can be loved by my Father, without suffering. St. Teresa adds, for our consolation: God never sends us affliction, without afterwards bestowing some favour as a recompence for it. Jesus Christ appeared one day to the blessed Varani, and said, that the greatest favours which he bestows on those who love him are: 1. Not to commit sin; 2. To do good, which is still more; 3. To suffer for his love, and this is the height of his favours. Hence, St. Teresa said, that whenever any one performed a good work for God, he rewarded it by some affliction. The saints never received affliction without returning thanks to God. St. Lewis, King of France, speaking of his captivity in Turkey, said, I am more delighted and more grateful to God for the patience he has granted me during my captivity, than if I had conquered the whole earth. When St. Elizabeth, Princess of Thuringia, was driven with her son out of her dominions after her husband's death, and forsaken by every one, she went to a convent of Franciscans, and there had the *Te Deum* chaunted in thanksgiving to God, for the precious grace which he had granted her of suffering for his love.

7. St. Joseph Calasanctius said, that all possible sufferings were nothing in comparison with the reward of heaven. This is conformable to the

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declaration of the great Apostle: that *the sufferings of this life are by no means worthy of being compared with the future glory that shall be revealed in us.* (Rom. viii. 18.) It would be a great advantage to suffer during our whole life all the torments of the martyrs to enjoy heaven, even for one instant. Now, how can we refuse to embrace with our whole heart the crosses which God sends us, when we know that these brief sufferings will purchase for us eternal glory? (2 Cor. iv. 17.) St. Agapitus, though an infant, far from being terrified by the treat of the tyrant to put a burning helmet upon his head, said to him: what greater happiness could befal me, than to lose my head here, that I may find it crowned in heaven? St. Francis also said: the good which I expect is so great, that it sweetens all my sufferings. Whoever wishes to obtain heaven, must combat and suffer. (2 Tim. ii. 5—12.) We can have no reward without merit, and no merit without patience. The greatest reward is reserved for the most perfect patience. Men always seek to amass earthly goods as much as possible; but as to eternal goods, they say, it is enough for us to have a corner in heaven. What infatuation! It was not thus the saints acted; they were satisfied with every thing, and even stripped themselves of their temporal riches. But with regard to eternal goods, they struggled to gain them as much as they could, which is the more prudent course.

8. If we confine our attention even to this life, is is certain that he who suffers with most patience, enjoys the most solid peace. St. Philip Neri said, that there was no purgatory in this world—nothing but heaven or hell; tribulations are a kind of pa-

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radise to him, who suffers them with patience, whilst they are a hell to him, who has no patience. Yes, because as St. Teresa observes, he who willingly embraces the cross which God sends him, does not feel it at all. St. Francis of Sales, finding himself immersed in grievous tribulations, said: the opposition and contradictions which I have experienced for some time, have made me enjoy an incomparable peace; they are a presage of the speedy and solid union of my soul with God; this, indeed, is all the ambition, all the desire of my heart. In a disorderly life we cannot find peace; it is to be found only in an union with God and his will. A missionary in India was attending a criminal to execution; the culprit called him and said: Father, I once belonged to your order; whilst I observed the rule I lived very happily; but from the moment I began to relax, I found every duty painful, so that at length I abandoned the religious state to become a slave to those vices which have brought me to this unhappy end. I tell you this history, said he, in order that my example may be useful to others. Father Lewis Dupont said: Look upon every thing sweet in this life as bitter, and upon every thing bitter as sweet, and you will be always in peace. Yes; because agreeable things are pleasing to the senses; but, on account of the sinful complaisance by which they are frequently attended, they leave the soul in the bitterness of remorse; whilst disagreeable things, if patiently endured for the love of God, fill the soul with an unspeakable sweetness.

9. Let us be convinced that we cannot enjoy true peace of heart in this valley of tears, unless we suffer tribulations and crosses with patience,

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and the desire of pleasing God. Such is the alternative to which sin has reduced us. The state of the saints on earth is one of suffering and love; that of the saints in heaven one of enjoyment and love. Father Paul Segneri, in order to encourage one of his penitents in suffering, advised him to write these words at the foot of his crucifix: *This is the way to love.* It is not even suffering, but the desire of suffering for the love of Jesus Christ, which really proves that we love him. What can be more precious, said St. Teresa, than to have a certainty of pleasing God. But, alas! the greater part of mankind are terrified at the very name of crosses, humiliations, and sufferings. Nevertheless, we sometimes find souls who esteem it their greatest happiness to suffer for the sake of pleasing God, and who would be almost inconsolable, if they lived without sufferings in this world. The sight of Jesus crucified, said a pious person, makes the cross appear so lovely in my eyes, that I fancy I could not be happy without sufferings: the love of Jesus is recompence enough for all. What advice did the Saviour give to him who desired to follow him? (Luke ix. 23.) It was to take up and carry his cross. But we must take it up and carry it, not by compulsion, or with repugnance, but with humility, patience, and love.

10. It cannot be expressed, how dear a person renders himself to God, by embracing with humility and patience, the crosses which he sends him. St. Ignatius of Loyola said: There is no wood more proper to excite and preserve the love of God within us, than that of the cross—that is, to love God in the midst of his sufferings. St.

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Gertrude one day asked the Lord, what was the most agreeable offering she could make him. Daughter, replied he, it is to bear with patience all the tribulations that may befal you. That faithful servant of God, Victor Angelini, declared, that one day spent in suffering, was preferable to an hundred years of all other spiritual exercises. The venerable Father John of Avila said, that one *God be praised* in time of adversity, was better than a thousand acts of thanksgiving in time of prosperity. Ah! if men knew the great value of sufferings, they would soon become an object of pleasure—that is, they would endeavour to wrest from each other, the opportunities of suffering for God. This love of suffering was so great in St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, that it made her wish to have her life prolonged, rather than to die and go to heaven, because in heaven there was no suffering.

11. A soul that loves God, has no other object but to be entirely united to him. Let us see what St. Catharine of Genoa thought necessary, to arrive at this perfect union. In order to arrive at an union with God, we must pass through the crucible of adversity. It is in this crucible God destroys every thing that is vicious in us. Thus, injuries, contempt, sickness, abandonment by our parents and friends, confusions, temptations, &c. are most necessary for us, in order that we may struggle in such a manner, and gain such victories, as will enable us to extinguish within us every inordinate desire, so as not to feel it any longer. We can arrive at this divine union only in the same proportion as we consider afflictions agreeable in the sight of the Lord.

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12. Let us conclude from all this, that a soul which desires to be entirely devoted to God, should resolve, as St. John of the cross teaches us, not to look for pleasure in this life, but to seek affliction in every thing, and to embrace with eagerness all voluntary mortifications, and still more, those that are involuntary, which are more agreeable to God. Solomon says, that a patient man is more esteemed than a man of courage. (Prov. xvi. 32.) God loves him who mortifies his flesh by fasting, hair-cloth and discipline, on account of the courage which he displays in these mortifications. But he loves still more him, who bears with patience and joy, the crosses which Providence sends him. St. Francis of Sales said, that mortifications which come from God, or from men, by the permission of God, are much more precious than those which proceed from our own will. The less share we have in choosing them, the more agreeable are our mortifications to God, and the more advantageous to ourselves. St. Teresa also believed that we acquire more merit from one day's mortification which come from God, or from men, than from ten year's mortifications of our own choosing. St. Magdalen de Pazzi declares, that there was no suffering so great which she did not endure with pleasure, when she reflected that it came from God. Indeed, during the great trials which she suffered for five years, it was only necessary to tell her, that *it was the will of God*, and the agitation of her mind was appeased. Ah! said Father Durasso, whatever price we pay to purchase a God, this infinite treasure is always too little.

13. Let us therefore beseech the Lord to ren-

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der us worthy of his love. If we have perfect love, all the goods of the earth will appear to us as smoke, as nothing; and we will consider ignominies and sufferings our greatest delight. Behold what St. John Chrysostom says of a soul that is entirely devoted to God. When a christian arrives at the perfect love of God, he feels as if he were alone on the earth: he thinks no longer of honour or disgrace, he despises temptations and sufferings, he loses all relish and desire for every thing human; and not finding in any thing support or rest, he constantly and indefatigably devotes himself to the search after him whom he loves, and in such a manner, that whether he is at work, or at meals, whether he be asleep or awake, he has no other object in all his thoughts, words and actions, but to find his dearly beloved, because his heart reposes where his treasure is. In this chapter we have spoken of patience in general: we will in the fifteenth chapter particularly explain the special occasions, on which we are bound to practice this virtue.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Jesus! my treasure and my All! my past sins should render me unworthy to love you. But do you, O my God! render me worthy of your pure love, through the merits of your passion. Grant that I may love you above all things, and that I may repent from my whole heart, for having heretofore despised you, and banished you from my soul by sin. Now, I love you more than myself; I love you with my whole heart, O infinite love! I love you; once more I love you, and my whole

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desire is to love you with a perfect love, and all my fear is to be deprived of your love. Ah! my divine Redeemer, make me know what you are, and the love you have shewn to me, to compel me to love you. Do not suffer me to be any longer ungrateful after such benefits. I have hitherto been too ungrateful. I wish never more to abandon you. I desire to spend the remainder of my life in loving and pleasing you. Jesus, my love! assist me; help a wretched sinner, who wishes to love you, and to become entirely yours. O Mary, my hope! your Son is always ready to hear you; pray to him for me, and obtain for me the grace to love him perfectly.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARITY IS MEEK.

He that loves Jesus Christ practises meekness.

1. THE spirit of meekness is peculiarly the spirit of God (Eccles. xxiv. 27.) Hence, the soul that loves God, also loves those who are loved by God, that is, all men. It seeks every opportunity to assist, comfort, and gratify all to the utmost of its power. St. Francis of Sales, the master and model of holy meekness, thus expresses himself on the subject. Humble meekness is the virtue of virtues, which God so earnestly recommends to us; and for this reason we should practice it at all times, and in all places. Do that which you see you can accomplish by love, and omit what cannot be done without dispute; of course

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we speak of that which may be omitted without sin, because as long as we are bound to prevent an offence against God, we should constantly, and to the utmost of our power, oppose it.

2. We should particularly practice meekness towards the poor and the sick; towards the poor, because, generally speaking, they are ill treated on account of their poverty; towards the sick, because they are afflicted with their illness, and are often without succour. But above all, we should be meek towards our enemies. (Rom. xii. 21.) We must overcome hatred by love, and persecution by meekness. It was thus the saints acted, and in this manner they conciliated the regard of their most inveterate enemies.

3. St. Francis of Sales says, that nothing edifies our neighbour so much as meekness in our conduct. Hence every thing in him partook of this beautiful virtue; his air, his words, his manners, all was meekness. St. Vincent of Paul said of him, that he never knew any man more meek; and added, that he seemed to find him the living image of the meekness of our Saviour. If he was obliged in conscience to refuse any favour, he accompanied the refusal with so much charity, that the unsuccessful applicant went away satisfied. He was equally meek to every one, superiors, equals, inferiors, and in the midst of his family, as well as amongst strangers; far different from those of whom he says himself, that they are angels abroad, and devils at home. He never complained of the deficiencies of his domestics; it was with difficulty he sometimes reproved them, but he always did it with mildness. This is most laudable in a superior, who should use all

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possible meekness towards those committed to his care; and who, imposing a task upon them, should rather intreat than command. St. Vincent of Paul says, that superiors cannot employ a better means of making themselves obeyed, than meekness; and St. Jane Frances de Chantal: I have used various methods of governing, and discovered none more effectual than that which is founded on forbearance and meekness.

4. A superior should use meekness even in his corrections. It is one thing to reprove strongly, and another to reprove angrily. We should sometimes give a strong reproof when a fault is great, and when it has been repeated after due admonitions; but we should take care never to reprove bitterly in a passionate tone, because this would do more harm than good. This would be the angry zeal, which St. James condemns. There are some who boast of keeping all their family in order by this means, and who say that it is thus they should be governed. But St. James says quite the contrary. (James iii. 14.) If, on a rare occasion, it be necessary to speak with some severity, in order to make a grievous crime be felt, we should always at the conclusion of the rebuke add some kind words. We must heal wounds as the Samaritan did, with wine and oil. But as oil floats above all other liquors, so, says St. Francis of Sales, meekness should predominate in all our actions. If the person whom we have to correct be in a passion or disturbed, we should defer the correction until he becomes more tranquil—for otherwise we should only irritate him more. St. John, Canon Regular said: when

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the house is on fire, we should not throw wood in the flames.

5. Jesus Christ himself teaches us this spirit of meekness. (Luke ix. 55, 56.) You know not of what spirit you are, said he to his disciples, James and John, when they wished him to punish the Samaritans, who had driven them out of their country. Ah! said the Saviour, what manner of spirit is that? It is not mine; my spirit is one of meekness and benignity. I have come not to destroy, but to save souls; and you would have me destroy them! Be silent; and never ask me any similar requests, which are opposed to my spirit. And, indeed, with what mildness did he not treat the woman that was taken in adultery? (John viii. 10, 11.) He contented himself with telling her to sin no more, and he dismissed her in peace. It was the same meekness that converted the Samaritan woman. First, he asks her for a drink, and then he says to her: Oh! if you knew who it is that asks you for a drink! He afterwards reveals to her that he was the expected Messiah. What meekness did he not employ to convert the wicked Judas! He received him at his table, he washed his feet, and at the very moment he was betrayed by him, he said to him: Judas, is it by a kiss that you betray me? Peter denied him; and how did Jesus make an impression upon him? He did not reprove him; but when he was going out of the house of the high-priest, he gave him a look of tenderness, and converted him; and converted him in such a manner, that during his whole life, Peter wept for the insult, which he had offered to his Master.

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6. We gain much more by meekness than by severity. St. Francis of Sales said, that at first there is nothing more bitter than almonds, but that when dressed, they become sweet and pleasant; it is precisely the same with corrections: disagreeable as they are, they become amiable and useful when they are given with meekness and tenderness. St. Vincent of Paul tells us, that he made during his whole life, but three severe reprimands, and that he was afterwards sorry for them; because, although he thought he had good reasons for using them, they were not attended with a happy result; whereas those which he made with meekness always succeeded.

7. St. Francis of Sales obtained from others any thing that he wished, by his meekness, and he even had the happiness to convert the most obstinate sinners to God by this means. This was also the spirit of St. Vincent of Paul, who gave this amongst other lessons, to his missionaries. Affability, love, and humility have a wonderful efficacy in gaining the hearts of men, and inducing them to embrace things that are most repugnant to nature. This saint once sent a great sinner to a father of his society for the purpose of being converted; but without any effect. The priest begged the saint to undertake the task. He did so, and succeeded. This sinner afterwards declared, that it was the saint's charity and meekness which had gained his heart. Hence, St. Vincent would not suffer his missionaries to treat their penitents with severity, and he declared to them, that the devil made use of the severity of some priests for the destruction of souls.

8. We should be mild and affable with the whole

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world, at all times, and in all places. St. Bernard observes, that there are some who are affable and meek only as long as things go on according to their wishes; but if a contradiction, or a cross befal them they are immediately inflamed, and emit smoke like Mount Vesuvius; they resemble burning coals, that are concealed under ashes. He who is anxious for his sanctification ought to be in this life, like a lily among thorns; although the lilies are pricked by the thorns, they do not cease to be lilies; that is, to be equally beautiful and agreeable. He that loves God preserves peace in his heart, and displays it in his countenance, which is always equally calm, both in adversity and prosperity.

9. It is in adversity that men are known. St. Francis of Sales tenderly loved the Order of the Visitation, which had cost him so much trouble. He frequently saw it in danger, on account of the persecutions which it had to endure. But the saint always preserved an unalterable peace, and an entire submission to the will of God, if it was his will that this order should be suppressed. It was then he spoke these words: The oppositions and contradictions which I have endured for some time, have made me experience a profound peace; they are a presage of the immediate union of my soul with God, which is the only desire of my heart.

10. When we have to reply to any one who has insulted us, we should be careful to do it always with meekness. A soft answer extinguishes the fire of wrath. (Prov. xv. 1.) If we feel ourselves angry, it is better for us to be silent, because we should speak amiss; so that when we

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become tranquil, we see that all our words were culpable.

11. We should also use meekness towards ourselves, when we have committed a fault. To be in a passion with ourselves after a crime, is not humility but pride; it is refusing to acknowledge that we are weak miserable creatures. St. Teresa said, that all humility which afflicts the soul, does not proceed from God, but the devil. To be angry with ourselves, after the commission of sin, is a greater fault than the former—a fault, which brings many others in its train; such as the omission of our usual devotions, of prayer, of communion, or the imperfect performance of them. St. Aloysius Gonzaga said, that the devil fishes in troubled waters. When the soul is in trouble it has but a weak knowledge of God and of its duty. When we have committed a fault let us address God with humility and confidence, and ask his pardon: saying to him, with St. Catharine of Genoa, O Lord, these are the fruits of my garden. I love you with my whole heart. I have offended you. I am sorry for it, and will never do so again. Grant me your holy grace.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O happy bonds who unite souls to God! reunite me also to him, and bind me so fast, that I may be never able to separate myself from his love. My Jesus! I love you. You are the treasure and the life of my soul. I give and bestow myself entirely to you. I desire to love you for ever. In order to expiate my sins, you were pleased to be tried like a criminal, led to execu-

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tion, nailed to a cross, and to remain upon it until death. Ah! I beseech you, through the merits of so many sufferings, not to permit me to be ever separated from you. I am more sorry for having offended you, than for all other evils, and I am resolved, with the assistance of your holy grace, to die, rather than relapse into any sin, whether great or small. My sweet Jesus! I abandon myself entirely into your hands. I love you with my whole heart. I love you more than myself. I have offended you. I wish to die of grief for it. Grant that I may be entirely yours. I renounce all sensible consolations. You alone I desire, and nothing more. Give me your love, and do with me whatever you please. O Mary! my hope, unite me to Jesus, and obtain that I may live and die in close union with him, in order that I may one day possess him in his glory, where I shall have no more fear of being separated from his love.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARITY IS NOT ENVIOUS.

The soul that loves Jesus Christ does not envy the great ones of this world, but only those who love Jesus Christ more than itself.

1. St. Gregory explains this third mark of charity, and says, that it is not envious, because it feels no envy towards worldings for their earthly grandeur, which it does not desire but despise. (Moral x. 8.) Hence, we must distinguish two kinds of envy—the one good, and the other

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wicked. The sinful envy is afflicted, on account of the earthly goods which others possess. Holy envy has not for its object the grandeurs of the world; it looks upon them with pity. All that it desires is God, and all its desire is to love him with its whole heart. Hence it is that it envies those who love him more than itself, because it would wish to exceed the Seraphim themselves in love.

2. This is the only end which the true christian proposes to himself here below; an object which fills him with so much love for God, that he says, One of your eyes has wounded my heart, (Cant. iv. 9.) for by this eye is understood the intention which the soul has in all its thoughts and actions, which is to please God. Worldings perform their actions for many improper motives, such as to please men, to gain esteem, to amass riches, or at least to gratify themselves. But the christian has only one eye to behold God in every thing, and to please him; he cries out with David: What have I desired on earth, or in heaven, O my God! but you alone? (Ps. lxxii. 26.) Yes, you are all my treasure; you alone are the master of my heart. I do not envy the rich their wealth, nor kings their crown, said St. Paulinus; you alone, O my Jesus! are my glory, and my happiness.

3. It is not enough to do good works; they must also be well done. In order that our works should be good and perfect, they must be performed with the intention of pleasing God. This is the praise which was given to Jesus Chsist: *He has done all things well.* There are many actions, otherwise praiseworthy, which will have

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none, or little merit in the sight of God, because they have not been referred solely to the glory of the Lord. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi said, that God rewards our good works in proportion to the purity of our intention; that is, the more pure our intentions are, the greater reward we will receive from God. But, alas! how difficult it is to find an act that is done for the sole purpose of pleasing God! An aged religious, who died lately in the odour of sanctity, after great labours in the service of God, was one day glancing at his past life, and said to me with affright: Ah! my father, of all the actions of my life, I have not found one which was performed for God alone! Cursed self-love makes us lose all, or a great part of the fruit of our good works. It often happens, even in the most holy occupations, such as that of a preacher, a confessor, or a missionary, that there is much labour and little profit, because, far from labouring solely for God, wordly glory, interest, or self gratification, may be the motives.

4. Our Savisur says: Take care not to do your good works so as to be seen by men, or you will receive no reward from your heavenly Father. (Matt. vi. 15.) He who labours in order to satisfy his own taste, has already received his reward; but a reward which is reduced to a little smoke, to a momentary satisfaction, which only passes away, and leaves no benefit to the soul. The prophet Aggæus declares, that he who labours for any other end, but to please God, puts the fruit of his labour into a bottomless sack, in which he will find nothing when he opens it. (Agg. i. 6.) From hence it follows, that he is in trouble and

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agitation, if, after all his pains, he has not attained the object in view. This is a proof that the glory of God alone was not his object. He who labours purely for the glory of God, is not troubled, even when he does not succeed; for having acted with the righteous intention of pleasing God, he has already obtained the end which he desired.

5. The following are the marks by which you may know, whether a person engaged in spiritual matters acts purely for God:—1. If he be not troubled, even when he does not succeed, because as it is not God's will that he should succeed, he no longer desires it. 2. If he rejoices as much at the good done by others, as at that done by himself. 3. If he does not prefer one occupation to another, but devotes himself exclusively to that which his superiors have marked out for him. 4. If after his actions, he seeks neither praises nor thanks, and consequently if, being found fault with, he is not disturbed, but satisfied solely with having pleased God; if, being praised and applauded, he does not become elated, but gives vain glory the answer which the venerable John D'Avila was wont to do: Begone —thou art too late. I have already consecrated all this work to God.

6. It is thus we enter into the joy of the Lord, by rejoicing at whatever pleases God, like the faithful servant. (Matt. xxv. 23.) If we have the happiness of doing any thing that is agreeable to God, says St. Chrysostom, what more do we require? Is it not the greatest regard, the greatest happiness a creature can have, to please its creator?

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7. This is what Jesus Christ desires from a soul that loves. (Can. viii. 6.) He wishes her to put him as a seal upon her heart, and her arms, that she may not undertake nor perform any thing, but for the purpose of pleasing God, and that God may always be the only object of her thoughts and actions. He who wishes to become a saint, said St. Teresa, ought to have no other desire but that of pleasing God. Every action done for God, no matter how trivial in itself, is above all price; and the reason is, because every thing done with the view of pleasing God is an act of charity, which of course unites us to God, and procures us eternal goods.

8. Purity of intention is called that heavenly alchemy which has the power of changing iron into gold; that is, of transforming into the gold of holy love the meanest actions, such as labour, repose and recreation. It was for this reason, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi thought that those who always acted with purity of intention went straight to heaven without passing through the flames of purgatory. It is related in the *Spiritual Treasure*, (vol. iv. c. 4.) that a holy solitary was in the habit of raising his eyes to heaven at the beginning of every action. When asked the reason, he replied, I do it in order to make sure my aim; that is, like a hunter he first took his aim, which was God, in order that he might not miss his object, which was to please God. This is what we should do also at the beginning of every action, and even during the action, by renewing from time to time, our intention of pleasing God.

9. Those who, in all their actions, seek only

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the will of the Lord, enjoy that holy liberty of spirit, which is possessed by the children of God, a liberty which makes them embrace every thing that is pleasing to Jesus Christ, in spite of all repugnance of self-love, or human respect. The love of God places them in an entire indifference; sweet or bitter, is all equal. They renounce their own inclinations, in order to desire only what pleases God. They engage as peacefully in trivial and disagreeable things, as in those which are agreeable and important; it is enough for them, that whatever they are doing is pleasing to God.

10. There are many persons who wish to serve God, but it is, in that employment, in that place, with those companions, and under those circumstances, that they please themselves: otherwise they either will not serve him at all, or do so with a bad grace. They have no liberty of spirit, but are the slaves of self-love; it is for this reason they have very little merit, even for the good which they do, and that they are always disturbed, because the yoke of Jesus Christ becomes a heavy one to them. Those, on the contrary, who truly love the Lord, find no pleasure but in doing what pleases him, and doing it in the time and place, and manner that he pleases; they are always as well pleased in humiliation and obscurity, as in honours and dignities. This is what constitutes the true lover of Jesus Christ, and what we should do to combat the suggestions of self-love, which makes us desire honourable employments, and those that are agreeable to our inclinations.

11. This indifference should extend ever to our spiritual exercises, so that we should be ready to

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abandon them as soon as the Lord should call us to perform something else. Father Alvarez finding himself one day very busy, was afraid he should lose sight of the Lord, if he did not retire to pray. But the Lord prevented him, and said: Although I do not keep you with me, it ought to be enough for you, that I make use of your services. It is an excellent advice for those who are disturbed, when obedience or charity obliges them to omit their pious practices; this inquietude does not, assuredly, come from God, but from the devil or self-love. To please God and to die, is the first maxim of the saints.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My God, I offer you my whole heart. But, alas! what is this heart which I offer you? It had been created to love, and it has rebelled against you so often; but behold, now, my Jesus! it is sorry for having offended you, and it loves you. Yes, O my divine Redeemer! I am sorry for having despised you, and I am resolved to obey you and to love you at all hazards. Ah! by the love which induced you to die on a cross for me, fill me with so much love for you, that I may love you with my whole heart, with my whole soul, and with all my strength. O true and only love of my soul, may I love you more than myself. And whom should I love instead of you? Who has ever given his life for my salvation, like you? and shall I not love you? Ah! I cannot think of my past ingratitude, without shedding a torrent of tears. Wretch that I am! I had lost myself; but I hope that your grace has restored

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me to life. I wish to spend it only in loving you, O my Sovereign good! Grant then, that I may love you, O infinite love! I ask you nothing more. O Mary! my mother, receive me into the number of your clients, and obtain that I may be numbered amongst the servants of your Son, Jesus.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARITY DEALETH NOT PERVERSELY.

He who loves Jesus Christ shuns tepidity, and seeks perfection. The means of attaining it are: 1. *The desire* 2. *The resolution to attain it.* 3. *Meditation.* 4. *Communion.* 5. *Prayer.*

1. ACCORDING as charity advances to perfection in the love of God, it rejects every thing which is not conformable to sanctity. (St. Gregory. Mor. x. 8.) St. Paul assures us, that charity combines in the soul the most perfect virtues. (Col. iii. 14.) Since then, charity loves perfection, it consequently hates tepidity, to which christians sometimes gives themselves up, at the risk of losing charity, grace, the soul, and every thing.

2. There are two kinds of tepidity: one which we may avoid, and the other which is inevitable. Unavoidable tepidity is that from which even the saints themselves are not exempt; it comprises all those defects which are committed by pure natural frailty, and without an entire consent, such as distractions in prayer, little interior troubles, useless words, vain curiosities, desires of making an appearance, some sensuality in eating and drinking, some motions of concupiscence,

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which are not quickly enough suppressed, &c. We should avoid all those defects as much as possible; but considering the weakness of our nature, corrupted by sin, it is impossible for us to avoid them all. Hence we should really detest them after having committed them, because they are still displeasing to God; but, according to what has been said in the preceding chapter, we should be careful not to agitate ourselves about them. These restless thoughts, says St. Francis of Sales, do not come from God, who is the Prince of Peace, but they always proceed either from the devil, or from self-love, or from the esteem we have for ourselves.

We should therefore reject those disturbing thoughts, and make no account of them. These imperfections, says the same saint, being indeliberate and involuntary, are also remitted without an express act of the will; an act of sorrow, or of love, is sufficient for this purpose. The venerable sister Mary saw one day a ball of fire, which in the twinkling of an eye, reduced to ashes a great number of little straws. God wished to give her to understand by this, that a fervent act of divine love consumes all the faults of pure frailty. The holy Council of Trent has said as much of the Eucharist, which it calls an antidote against daily faults. (Sess. xiii. 2.) These imperfections are faults, it is true, but they are not an obstacle to perfection; that is, an obstacle to advance to perfection, because true perfection is to be found only in heaven.

4. The tepidity which we may avoid, is an obstacle to perfection. A person is in this state who commits deliberate venial sins; sins which

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he already sees, and which he might easily avoid, with the assistance of grace. God preserve you, said St. Teresa, from deliberate sin, whether great or small. Such are, for example, voluntary lies, small detractions, imprecations, sharp words, railleries contrary to charity, the desire of being esteemed, inordinate affections for persons of a different sex, &c. These, continues the same saint, are like so many little pieces of glass, which are the more to be feared, because it is difficult to perceive them, until they have wounded our virtues. The devil employs small faults, in order to lead the soul into greater excesses.

5. Let us then take particular care not to commit such deliberate faults, because they would deprive us of an abundance of lights, graces, and interior consolations. Then we would begin to find our pious exercises painful and tedious; finally, we would omit prayer, our communions, visits to the holy sacrament, novenas, and at length abandon all, as has unhappily been the case with so many unfortunate souls.

6. Reflect on the threat which God addresses to tepid souls. You are neither cold nor hot: it would be a lesser evil to be cold; but because you are lukewarm, I will begin to cast you out of my mouth. (Apoc. iii. 15. 19.) Yes, it is in some manner better to be cold, deprived of the grace of God, than to be tepid; because he who is cold, may be aroused by the remorse of conscience, and change his life; whilst he who is tepid, remains quietly in his faults, without even thinking of correcting them, and affords no hope of his cure. The venerable Father Louis Dupont said, that he had committed an infinite number of

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faults during his life, but that he had never made peace with them. There are some who make peace with their defects, and this is injurious, particularly where self-love, vain glory, avarice, aversion, or an inordinate affection for a person of the opposite sex is concerned. We have then great reason to fear, said St. Francis of Assisium, that these hairs may not become chains to drag such souls to hell. They will, at least, never arrive at perfection; and they will lose the great crown which God had prepared for them, if they remain faithful to his grace. When the bird is not tied by any thing, he takes his flight; in like manner, when the soul has no earthly attachment, it flies quickly into the bosom of God; but when it is tied, a thread is sufficient to prevent it from approaching to God. How many spiritual persons are there, who do not sanctify themselves, because they will not give up certain little attachments!

7. All our misfortune springs from the little love we have for Jesus Christ. Some are full of self esteem; others get into a passion at every event which happens contrary to their inclination. Some are too indulgent to themselves, on account of health: others often listen with avidity to discourses that have no reference to God, and that are capable only of gratifying their whims; others, in fine, are mortified at the least insult, which they fancy they receive; they are disturbed, they give up prayer, or at least, have not that recollection which belongs to prayer. They pass in one moment from joy to sadness or anger, according as their affairs succeed to their wishes or not. Now, all these persons do not love Jesus

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Christ, or their love for him is very imperfect and discreditable to true devotion.

8. But what measures should we take to arise from this unhappy state of tepidity? Although it be very difficult for a tepid soul to recover its former fervor, the Lord has said, that what may be impossible to man, is not so with God. (Luke xviii. 27.) We must, therefore, pray and adopt the necessary means, and we will succeed. The means for arising from tepidity, and advancing in perfection are—1. The desire of this perfection; 2. The resolution to use every effort to attain it; 3. Meditation; 4. Frequent communion; 5. Prayer.

9. The first, therefore, is the desire of perfection. Holy desires are, as it were, the wings which raises us from the earth; for St. Laurence Justinian says, that every desire of holiness, both gives us courage to advance towards perfection, and renders this task more sweet and more easy. He who has a real desire of perfection makes some progress every day, and if he continues he will attain it in the end. He, on the contrary, who has not this desire will always fall back, and will find himself every day more imperfect than before. St. Augustine says, that in the way of salvation, not to advance is to recede. He who makes no effort to advance straightforward is enchained by corrupt nature.

10. It is a great error to say, God does not wish we should all be saints; God desires, says St. Paul, (1 Thess. iv. 3.) that we should be all saints, each in his own state, and according to his condition in life. The religious, the man in the world, the priest, the married man, the mer-

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chant, the soldier, all classes, in fine, ought to be saints, according to their state. St. Teresa assures us, that if our thoughts be elevated, we will derive great advantages from them. It is not necessary to realize our desires, but to hope with the assistance of God, joined to all our own efforts, to be able to arrive by degrees, at the perfection of the saints. She had always seen courageous persons make great progress in a little time, because, said she, the Lord receives as much satisfaction from a simple desire, as from its accomplishment. God bestows singular favours on those who earnestly desire his love. God never fails to reward good desires in this life: he loves generous souls, provided they are diffident of themselves. This saint had so great a desire to love Jesus Christ, that she said to him one day, it would affect her little to see others in greater glory than herself in heaven: but she knew not how she could endure that any one should love God more than herself.

11. Let us, then, be animated with courage, (Lam. iii. 25.) God is good and bountiful to those who seek him with their whole hearts. There is nothing, not even in our past sins, that can prevent us from becoming saints, if we really desire it. St. Teresa says, the devil makes it appear to us as pride, to have elevated desires, or to wish to imitate the saints; but it is most useful to excite ourselves to great things; for, although the soul may not afterwards have strength enough to attain them, yet the generous effort which she makes will lead her a great way. St. Paul says, that every thing co-operates for the benefit of those who love God. (Rom. viii. 28.) The gloss,

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or ancient commentary adds, that even our very sins may co-operate to our sanctification, inasmuch as the remembrance of our sins may render us more humble, and excite our gratitude to God for the benefits which he has heaped upon us, notwithstanding our many offences against him. I can do nothing, should the sinner say to himself, and I deserve nothing except hell; but I have to deal with a God, who is infinitely good, and who has promised to hear whosoever should call upon him. Now, since he has delivered me from eternal death, as he desires my sanctification, and offers me his assistance for that purpose, I can then sanctify myself, not by my own strength, but by the grace of my God, which strengthens me. (Phil. iv. 13.) When, therefore, we shall conceive those good desires, let us with confidence in God, and great courage, hasten to execute them; and, if we find that any of these desires be impracticable, let us be resigned to the will of God, which should have the preference before ours. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi wished rather to be deprived of perfection than to acquire it without the will of God.

12. The second means to attain perfection is the resolution to give ourselves entirely to God. There are persons who are called to perfection, and have the desire to acquire it; but because they want resolution, they live on in their tepidity and imperfections. It is not enough to have the mere desire of perfection; it is also necessary to have a firm resolution of attaining it. How many souls content themselves with desires, and make not the least progress in the way of the Lord! These are the desires, which the wise man says,

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kill the slothful. (Prov. xxi. 25.) A slothful person wastes himself away in desires, but he never takes the necessary means to sanctify himself in his state. He says, Oh, that I were in a desert, and not here! Oh, that I could pass into another monastery! I would there give myself entirely to God. Meanwhile he cannot endure a companion that is disagreeable to him, he cannot suffer the least contradiction, he engages in useless cares, he falls into a thousand faults of gluttony, of curiosity, and pride; yet, he sighs and exclaims, Oh, that I am not in such a situation! Oh, that I cannot accomplish such a project! &c. &c. Such desires are more injurious than useful: for one is satisfied with them, and becomes wedded to his imperfections. St. Francis of Sales said: a person who is engaged in any occupation or condition, should not confine himself to the desire of a life different from what is suitable to his actual state, nor of other exercises that are incompatible with his state; this thought dissipates the heart and makes it perform the duties of obligation with tepidity.

13. We should, therefore, desire perfection, and courageously adopt the means necessary to attain it. According to St. Teresa, all that God requires from us is a good resolution; he will undertake to accomplish the rest himself. The devil has no fear for those souls who want resolution. Meditation serves to make us adopt those means, which lead to perfection. But it happens that persons make long meditations without ever coming to any conclusion. I prefer, said the same saint, a brief meditation, which would produce great effects, to one of many year's duration,

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during which no resolution is ever taken to do any thing of importance for God. I have found by experience, that if one has resolved from the beginning to do any thing, with the view of pleasing God, no matter how difficult it may be, there is no reason to fear.

14. The first resolution should be, to die rather than commit the smallest sin of deliberation. It is true that we cannot overcome temptations without the assistance of God; but God wishes us to begin by doing every thing in our power, after which he bestows his grace to assist our weakness, and to obtain for us a victory. This resolution removes every obstacle, and causes us to advance boldly, because it affords us the assurance that we are in the grace of God, according to these words of St. Francis of Sales. The greatest certainty of being in the grace of God that we can have in this world, does not consist in a sensible love of God, but in an entire and irrevocable submission to his will, and a firm resolution never to consent to any sin great or small: that is, this certainty consists in a great tenderness of conscience, without scrupulosity. We must have a delicate conscience, in order to become holy: but a scrupulous one would be most injurious. We should, therefore, obey our spiritual director in this point, and overcome those scruples, which are only vain and unreasonable apprehensions.

15. We should then determine to select, without reserve, whatever shall be best; that is, not only whatever is agreeable to God, but also, whatever is most pleasing to him. St. Francis of Sales wishes us to begin by a strong and firm resolution

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of giving ourselves entirely to God, protesting to him, that for the future, we desire to belong to him without reserve, and to renew frequently this resolution. St. Andrew Avellinus made a vow to advance every day in perfection. Nevertheless, to become a saint, it is not necessary to make a vow; but it is essential that we should every day take care to advance some steps in perfection. St. Laurence Justinian assures us, that when once a person has entered with his whole heart on the way of perfection, he feels the desire of advancing farther, increasing more and more within him, and that this desire strengthens in proportion as he advances, because each day shedding new light upon him, he always believes that he has no virtue, and that he does no good, and that if the good which he performs be evident, it seems so imperfect in his eyes, that he makes no account of it. Thus he continually labours to acquire perfection, and never relaxes in its pursuit.

16. We should immediately execute our resolutions, without waiting for the morrow. Who knows if we delay a little longer, whether we shall have time? Hence, follow the advice of the Holy Ghost. (Eccles. ix. 10.) Defer not that which you can do presently; and for this reason, because in the life to come we shall no longer have either time or opportunities to do good, or to acquire merit. A certain religious led a very tepid life. Father Lancizius was conducting spiritual exercises in this convent. This religious assisted at them against her will, and had not the slightest notion of arising from her tepidity. But she hardly heard the entire of the

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first discourse, when she went and cast herself at the feet of the preacher, and said to him, Father, the work is done. I wish to become a saint, and that immediately. By the grace of God, she died eight months after in the odour of sanctity.

17. I have said: I begin, (Ps. lxvi. 11.) St. Charles Borromeus repeated also every morning. To-day I only begin to serve God. It is thus we should likewise act, as if we had done no good during our past life. Indeed, every thing that we do for God is nothing, because it is our duty to do it. Let us then, every day form a resolution of devoting ourselves to God. Let us not consider what others do; there are very few who labour in earnest to become saints. St. Bernard says: If we wish to imitate the generality of mankind, we will be always like them imperfect. We must vanquish all, and renounce all, in order to obtain all. When we cease to give all our hearts to God, said St. Teresa, he no longer bestows us all his love. My God! every thing that we do for Jesus Christ is of no importance, since he has given us his blood and his life. All that we can do for God is nothing but dung, in comparison to one drop of the blood, which our Saviour has shed for us. The saints stopped at no sacrifice, when there was question of pleasing a God, who gave himself for us entirely, and without reserve, for the special purpose of laying us under an obligation of refusing him nothing. God has given himself entirely to you, says St. Chrysostom; is it not just that you should give yourself entirely to him. He has died for us all, says the apostle, in order that each one of us should live only to love him. 2 Cor. v. 15.

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18. The next means of becoming holy is meditation. He who does not meditate on eternal truths cannot, without a miracle, lead a christian life, because, without meditation, he is without light, and walks in darkness. The truths of faith cannot be perceived by the eyes of the body, but only by those of the soul during meditation. He who does not meditate does not see them, and consequently walks in darkness. In this state he very easily attaches himself to sensible objects, and despises eternal goods. Although it may seem that we have no imperfections within us, yet from the moment that God enlightens our souls as he does in mental prayer, they begin to discover themselves. St. Bernard thinks, that he who does not meditate has no horror of himself, because he knows not himself. Meditation regulates the affections of the soul, and directs our actions towards God: but without meditation our affections are wedded to earth, our works are conformable to our affections, and, thus all is in disorder.

19. A religious being at prayer heard a devil, who boasted of having made another religious omit her usual meditation, and saw, in spirit, that the devil, encouraged by his first success, was inducing her to consent to a still greater fault. She was on the point of falling into it, when she was admonished and preserved from it by the other. St. Teresa said, that he who gives up meditation, will soon become like a beast or a devil.

20. He, therefore, who abandons mental prayer, will also cease to love Jesus Christ. Meditation is the blessed furnace in which the fire of divine love is enkindled and preserved. (Ps. xxxviii. 4.)

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St. Catharine of Bologna said, that he who does not acquire the habit of meditation, deprives himself of that link which unites the soul to God; hence, it will not be surprising if, in this state of coldness, he should be induced by the devil to feed on poisonous fruit. On the other hand, according to St. Teresa, whosoever perseveres in prayer, will by a particular grace of God, assuredly arrive at the gate of salvation, no matter what efforts the devil may make to seduçe him into evil. He who does not stop on the way of prayer, will not fail to arrive at salvation, although he should enter late. She assures us, that the reason why the devil makes such efforts to withdraw our souls from meditation, is because he knows that he has no chance of gaining the soul which perseveres in this holy exercise. What advantages do we not derive from meditation! It inspires the soul with holy thoughts, pious affections, great desires, and firm resolutions of devoting itself entirely to God; and then the soul sacrifices to the Lord all the pleasures of the earth, and all inordinate appetites. We can never have great perfection, said St. Aloysius, if we do not make a great use of mental prayer. We should attend to those remarkable words.

21. Meditation should not be practised for the purpose of tasting therein the sweets of divine love, for this would be a loss of time, with very little profit. We should meditate solely for the purpose of pleasing God—that is, to know his holy will, and to beg of him the grace to accomplish it. The venerable Father Antony Torres said, that we fly to perfection, when we bear our cross without consolations. The prayer which is

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not accompanied by sensible consolations is most advantageous to the soul; but woe to that soul who abandons it because it does not find those consolations! To give up the habit of meditation, said St. Teresa, is to precipitate oneself into hell, without having any need of devils to do so.

22. Meditation accustoms us to think always of God. The true lover, said St. Teresa, often thinks of the person he loves. Hence it is that men of prayer never cease speaking of God, because they know how pleasing it is to God, that those who love him should make it their delight to speak of him, and of his love for them, in order to inflame others with his love. Jesus Christ is always present at the conversations of his servants, and he is delighted to see them entertain themselves in pleasing him.

23. Meditation also enkindles a desire of solitude, in order to converse there alone with God, and to preserve interior recollection in exterior and necessary affairs. I say necessary, such as the cares of a family, or the duties imposed by obedience, for a man of prayer should love solitude, and not suffer himself to be voluntarily dissipated by useless affairs; otherwise he will lose that spirit of recollection, which is a great means of preserving union with God. (Cant. iv. 12.) The soul that loves Jesus Christ ought to be a garden shut against all creatures, and should admit no thoughts or affairs, which do not relate to God. We will not become holy, if we keep our hearts open to all objects. The saints were always recollected; when they were gaining souls to God and in the midst of their labours, when they preached, heard confessions, reconciled persons

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at variance, or studied. There are men who by studying too much to become wise, acquire neither wisdom nor holiness, because the true science is that of the saints, namely: the love of Jesus Christ, and divine love furnishes wisdom and all other blessings. (Wisdom vii. 11.) The venerable John Berchmans had a particular taste for study, but he never allowed it to interfere with his spiritual advancement. A priest should be instructed, because he is bound to teach the divine law to others, (Mal. ii. 7.) but knowledge itself should be mingled with moderation. (Rom. xii. 3.) To abandon prayer in order to have leisure to study, would shew that we studied not to please God, but ourselves. He who seeks God, should give up study when it is not actually necessary, sooner than omit prayer.

24. The greatest misfortune is, that without mental prayer, we do not pray at all: now prayer is absolutely necessary for salvation, as I have often inculcated in my works, and particularly in that *On Prayer.** How can we preserve charity, if God does not give us perseverance? And how can God grant us perseverance, if we do not ask it of him? And how can we ask it without prayer? Without prayer we have no communication with God, which would enable us to preserve virtue. Without prayer, we have an imperfect knowledge of the wants of our soul, the dangers to which our salvation is exposed, or the means to overcome temptations. Thus, we know very little of the necessity of prayer, we omit it, and we are infallibly lost.

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25. As subjects of meditation, the most useful are, to meditate on the four last things—death, judgment, hell, and heaven; but above all, on death, by imagining we are stretched on our death bed, with the crucifix in our hand, and on the point of entering into eternity. The passion of our Saviour is also a very useful subject for him who loves Jesus Christ, and desires to increase every day in his holy love. St. Francis of Sales says, that Mount Calvary is the mount of lovers; it is there they fix their abode. What can be more suitable to inspire us with divine love, than the sight of a God who dies for our sake, and because he loves us? The wounds of the Saviour are like so many darts, which pierce the most hardened hearts. Happy is he who lives in this life on Mount Calvary! O happy, amiable, precious mountain, who can quit you? You inflame and consume with love, those souls who choose you for their continual abode.

26. The fourth means to arrive at perfection, and obtain perseverance, is a frequent approach to the holy communion. We have already said, in chap. II. that a soul can do nothing more agreeable to Jesus Christ, than to receive him often in the sacrament of the altar. St. Teresa thinks that there is not a better means of arriving at perfection, than frequent communion, as is proved by the experience of those who approach it often. The decree of Innocent XI. in 1679, declares, that the holy fathers have strongly recommended the use of frequent, nay daily communion. The holy Council of Trent has said, (Sess. xiii. 2.) that communion delivers us from daily faults, and preserves us from grievous sins.

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St. Bernard assures us, that communion represses the motions of anger and incontinence, which are the passions most strong, and most frequent amongst us. Communion destroys the suggestions of the devil. St. John Chrysostom tells us, that communion inspires us with a great inclination for virtue, and a great anxiety to practise them, that it gives great peace, and renders the way of perfection sweet and easy. No sacrament inflames souls with divine love so much as the sacrament of the eucharist, in which Jesus Christ gives himself entire, to unite us to him by means of his love. For this reason, the venerable Father John of Avila said, that he who dissuades souls from frequent communion, does the work of the devil; because the devil has a great hatred for this sacrament in which souls receive so much strength to advance in the love of God.

27. In order to approach the holy communion worthily, two kinds of preparation are to be made —remote and immediate. The remote preparation for frequent and daily communion is: 1. To abstain from every inordinate and voluntary attachment. 2. To make frequent meditations. 3. To mortify the senses and the passions. St. Francis of Sales, and St. Thomas, teach that we may communicate every day; the former, (Devout Life, xx.) when we have surmounted the greater part of our evil inclinations, and arrived at a remarkable degree of perfection; the latter, (Dist. ii. q. 13. a. 1.) when we perceive, that by daily communion we increase in fervor, and in the love of God. Innocent XI. says, that the intervals between communion should be regulated by the confessor. The immediate preparation consists in

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making, at least, half an hour's meditation upon the subject on the morning of communion.

28. We should also make a sufficiently long thanksgiving, in order to derive great benefit from communion. Father John of Avila, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and St. Teresa, say, that after communion is the time to acquire treasures of grace, the time most proper to enkindle the flame of divine love, and that we should not neglect so happy an opportunity of conversing with God, because his Divine Majesty is incapable of badly requiting him who receives him with gratitude.

29. Some timid souls, when exhorted by their confessor to communicate more frequently, reply, *that they are unworthy to do so.* But do you not know, that the longer you defer your communion, the more unworthy you become; for, without communion, you have less strength, and commit more faults? Obey your director, and suffer yourself to be guided by him; these faults are not an obstacle to communion, when they are not fully voluntary. Your greatest fault is not to obey your spiritual father.

30. *But I have led an irregular life.* What! do you not know that it is he who is most infirm, requires most a physician and a remedy? Now, Jesus Christ, in the sacrament of the altar, is both one and the other. (St. Ambrose, de Sacr. c. 6.) *But my confessor does not tell me to communicate more frequently.* He does not tell you; do you ask his permission. If he refuse it, obey him; but, however, make the request. *It would be like pride.* It would be pride, if you wished to communicate in opposition to his advice, but it is not pride to ask his permission with humility.

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Jesus wishes that we should hunger after this heavenly bread. How powerful is the reflection, that *to-day I have received communion, or to-morrow I am to communicate,* to withdraw us from sin, and make us practise virtue! *But I feel no fervor.* If you speak of sensible devotion, it is not necessary, and God does not bestow it even to those souls that are his greatest favorites. It is enough to have the fervour of a will determined to belong entirely to God, and to love him every day more and more. Gerson says, that he who abstains from communion, because he has not sensible devotion, is like a man who should refuse to go to the fire, because he was not warm.

31. Alas! how many are there who do not communicate often, because they will not resolve to live with more recollection, and with a greater detachment from earthly things. We know that frequent communion is not compatible with the desire of show, with vanity in dress, or nicety in eating, with our own ease, or useless conversations. We know that we should give more time to prayer, mortify our senses and spirit more, and be more retired from the world. We know all this, and hence it is, we are afraid to approach the holy table more frequently. It is true that such souls ought to abstain from frequent communion, as long as they remain in this unhappy state of tepidity. But if they do not wish to hazard their salvation, they should make every effort to arise from this tepidity, when they are called to a more perfect life.

32. To preserve devotion, it is also most useful to make frequently a spiritual communion, which is so recommended by the fathers of Trent, who

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exhort all the faithful to practise it. (Sess. xiii. c. 8.) Spiritual communion (St. Thom. iii. q. 80.) consists in a lively desire to receive Jesus Christ in the adorable sacrament. This is the reason why the saints are wont to make it often in the day. It may be made in this manner: *O my Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that you are really present in the holy sacrament. I love you, and desire to receive you: enter into my soul. I unite myself to you, and beg that you will never permit me to be separated from you.* Or more briefly thus: *O my Lord Jesus Christ enter into me. I desire you, and unite myself to you. Let us be always united.* This spiritual communion might be made several times in the day, such as at our prayers, at our visits to the blessed sacrament, or at mass, during the communion of the priest. The blessed Angelica of the Cross said: *If my confessor had not taught me to communicate frequently during the day in this manner, I think I could not exist.*

33. The fifth, and most necessary of all means for arriving at perfection, and acquiring the love of Jesus Christ, is prayer. It is in prayer that Jesus Christ discloses to us the great love he has for us. Could one give a greater proof of his love to his friend, than to say to him: *My dear friend, ask me any thing you please, and I will give it to you.* Now, this is precisely what the Lord has declared to us. (Luke xi. 9.) After this express promise, prayer is all-powerful with God, to obtain for us all manner of blessings. He that prays, obtains from God every thing that he wishes. (Ps. lxv. 20.) In proportion as you persevere in prayer, be certain of obtaining the divine mercy, says St. Augustine. St. John Chrysostom adds, that whilst

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we are at prayer, and even before its conclusion, the Lord grants us the favour which we ask. If then we are poor in spiritual goods, we have to complain only of ourselves; for we are only so far poor as we wish to be, and we are therefore unworthy of compassion. What pity should there be for a beggar, who, after the promise of a rich man to furnish him with every thing, provided he asked it, should nevertheless remain in his poverty rather than ask what he wanted? God, says the apostle, is entirely disposed to assist those who invoke him. Rom. x. 12.

34. Truly, humble prayer obtains every thing from God: it is not less necessary than useful for salvation. It is certain, that in order to overcome temptations, we stand in absolute need of God's assistance; when the assaults are violent, the sufficient grace which God bestows on all, may give us strength enough to resist; but considering our evil inclinations, it will not be enough for us, and we will require a special grace. Now, he that prays obtains this grace; and he who does not pray, does not obtain it, and is lost. With regard to the gift of final perseverance to die in the grace of God, which is absolutely necessary to salvation, St. Augustine says, that God bestows it only on those who pray. Behold the reason why the number of the elect is so small; it is because so few are engaged in beseeching God for this grace of perseverance.

35. The Holy Fathers say, that prayer is necessary for us, not only by a *necessity of precept*; so that one commits a mortal sin, if he neglects for an entire month to recommend his salvation to God; but also by a *necessity of means*—that is,

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that it is impossible for him who does not pray, to be saved. And for this reason we cannot obtain salvation without grace, and we will not receive this grace from God, without prayer. As we are constantly assailed by temptation, and in danger of losing the grace of God; so our prayers should be also continual. It is for this reason St. Thomas says, that in order to be saved, a man's life should be a continual prayer. Jesus Christ has declared it, (Luke xviii. 1.) and St. Paul has repeated it. (Thess. v. 17.) If we cease to recommend ourselves to God, the devil will overcome us. Although we cannot merit the grace of perseverance, according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, (Sess. vi. c. 13.) yet we may merit it in some manner by prayer. (St. August. de Persev. c. vi.) The Lord desires to bestow us his favours, but he wishes us to pray for them; he desires, adds St. Gregory, to be importuned, and to be offered a sort of violence by prayer. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi assures us, that when we ask favours from God, he not only hears us, but also feels a pleasure at our request, because being infinite goodness, God desires to communicate to man an accumulation of benefits. But he wishes to be asked for them, and hence, the pleasure that he feels, when he sees us pray, is so great, that he in some manner rewards us for it.

36. If we wish to persevere in the grace of God until death, we must be like mendicants, with our mouths always open to beg of God to assist us. *My sweet Jesus have mercy on me. Never suffer me to be separated from you. O Lord assist me. O God help me.* Such was the continual prayer of the ancient fathers of the desert.

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O Lord help me: hasten to assist me, for if you delay to help, I will fall, and shall be lost. We should particularly do this in time of temptation; whoever neglects it is ruined.

37. Let us have great confidence in prayer, God has promised to hear him that prays; let us not doubt him; he is engaged to grant us those graces which we implore; he cannot fail to do so. (St. August. de Verb. ser. 2.) When we pray to God we should have an entire confidence that he will hear us, and we will obtain every thing we desire. Jesus Christ himself says so, Mark xi. 24.

38. But, some one will say: *I am a sinner! I do not deserve to be heard.* But what says Jesus Christ? (Luke xi. 10.) *Whosoever shall ask, will obtain:* he says, *whosoever*, whether saint or sinner. The efficacy of prayer does not arise from our own merits but from the mercy of God, who has promised to hear whosoever shall pray. (St. Thomas ii. 2. q. 178.) In order to encourage us to pray, our Saviour says to us, (John xvi. 23.) Sinners, you have no merits to obtain graces, but when you desire any favours, ask them of my Father in my name; that is, through my merits, and my love: ask him every thing that you wish, and he will grant it to you. But observe these words—*in my name*, or rather, as St. Thomas explains it, in the name of the Saviour; so that the graces which we ask, should have reference to salvation, because the promise was not made for temporal graces. God bestows us the latter only as far as they are profitable to our salvation; otherwise he refuses them. Hence, we should ask for temporal favours, on condition that they are useful to our soul. But with regard to spiritual

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graces, we should ask them with a great, an entire confidence, saying, *O Lord my God, in the name of Jesus Christ, deliver me from this temptation. Grant me holy perseverance. Give me your love. Grant me heaven.* We can also ask them from Jesus Christ, and in his name; that is, by his merits; this we are taught by himself. (John xiv. 14.) Let us not fail also to have recourse to Mary, the dispensatrix of graces; for it is God who bestows graces, but he gives them by the hand of Mary. (S. Bernard.) If Mary prays for us we should not doubt of success, for all her prayers are heard, and never rejected.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Jesus, my love, I am decidedly resolved to love you from my whole heart, and to sanctify myself. I desire to sanctify myself, in order to please you, and to love you here in this life, and during eternity. I can do nothing; but you, you can do every thing, and I know that you wish me to become a saint. I perceive already that by an effect of your grace, my soul sighs after you and seeks you alone. I no longer wish to live for myself. You desire that I should be entirely yours, and it is my wish also. Come, then, unite yourself to me, and me to you. You are infinite goodness; you have infinitely loved me; with so many lovely attractions, how can I love any thing but you? I prefer your love to all worldly goods. You alone are the only object of all my affections. I abandon all, in order to deliver myself entirely to your love, O my Creator, my Redeemer, my comfort, my hope, my love, and my all! What-

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ever sins I have committed in my past life, I do not despair of my sanctification. I know, O my Jesus, that you died to forgive the penitent sinner. I now love you with all my heart, with all my mind, in a word, more than myself, and I am sorry above all things to have despised you, who are the sovereign good; I no longer belong to myself; I am now yours. God of my heart, dispose of me as you please. I accept, in order to please you, all the tribulations you wish to send me, sickness, pains, anguish, ignominy, poverty, persecutions, desolations: all these I accept to please you. I accept also the death which you have prepared for me, with all the pains and crosses that shall accompany it: it will be enough for me, if you grant me the grace to love you ardently. Grant me the grace and strength to make compensation by my love for my past infidelities, O my God, the only love of my soul! O Queen of heaven, O Mary, mother of God powerful advocate of sinners! I place my confidence in your intercession.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARITY IS NOT PUFFED UP.

He that loves Jesus Christ does not pride himself on his good qualities, but humbles himself, and takes a pleasure in seeing himself humbled.

1. A PROUD man is like a balloon, which seems to be great, but all its greatness consists of a little air, which is scattered when the balloon is opened.

2. God, said St. Teresa, speaking of the special

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favors which she had received from him, God treats me just as men do a house that is ready to fall; they prop it up on all sides. When a soul receives any visit from God, feels an extraordinary fervor of divine love, accompanied with tears or great sensibility of heart, it should take care not to imagine that God favors it thus, in consequence of some good work; let it humble itself and be persuaded that God treats it so well, in order that it may not abandon him. For, if on the contrary, it feels any sentiment of vanity, on account of those favours, and believes that it is so favored, because it serves God better than others; this vanity would induce God to deprive it of all his favors. In order to preserve a building two things are necessary, the foundation and the roof. Now, in the edifice of our sanctification the foundation is humility, which forces us to acknowledge that of ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing; the roof is the protection of God, in which alone we should place our trust.

3. The more we are favored by God, the more we should humble ourselves. When St. Teresa received any special grace she placed before her eyes her past faults, and by this means the Lord united her more closely to himself. The more a soul declares itself unworthy of graces, the more God enriches it. Thais, who from being a sinner became a saint, humbled herself so much in the presence of God, that she believed herself unworthy to pronounce his name. Hence, she would not dare to say, my God; but she said, thou who hast made me, have mercy on me. St. Jerome relates, that in recompence of such humility he saw a great throne prepared for her in heaven.

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When St. Margaret of Cortona received extraordinary consolations from God, she cried out: Oh, Lord! how have you forgotten what I have been? Is it thus you repay me for so many injuries which I have done you? The Lord answered her, that when a soul loves him, and is sorry for having offended him, he forgets all his past faults, as he has declared by the prophet Isaiah, (xviii. 21, 22.) and he gave her to understand that he had prepared a great throne for her in heaven in the midst of the seraphim. Oh! if we could understand all the value of humility. One act of humility is better than all the riches of the earth.

4. Do not imagine that you have made any progress in perfection, says St. Teresa, unless you consider yourself the most wicked of men, and desire that every one should be preferred before you. This saint was not satisfied with declarations of humility, she practised it; and all the saints acted in the same manner. St. Francis of Assisium, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and other saints, really believed themselves to be the greatest sinners in the world; they were amazed that the earth suffered them to walk on it, and did not open under their feet. When the venerable John of Avila, who from his tenderest youth had led a holy life, was on his death bed, the priest who attended him spoke to him of sublime subjects, and treated him as a saint and a person of great learning; but the venerable man said to him: I beseech you, father, to recommend my soul to God as you would that of a malefactor condemned to death, for I am nothing else. Such is the opinion the saints had of themselves during life, and in death.

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5. This is also the opinion of ourselves, which we should entertain, if we wish to preserve the grace of God until death, and to be saved; let us place our confidence in God alone. The proud man confides in his own strength, and hence he falls. But the man of humility, even when assailed by the most violent temptations, victoriously resists them, because he puts his confidence in God, and says: *I can do all things in him who strengthens me.* (Phil. iv. 13.) The devil sometimes tempts us to presumption, and at others to despair; when he tells us there is no danger of falling, it is then we have most reason to fear; for, if God withdraws for a moment the assistance of his grace, we are lost. When we are tempted to despair, let us turn our eyes to God, and say to him with great confidence, (Ps. xxx. 2.) My God! It is in you I have placed all my hope. I will never be confounded nor deprived of your grace. We should to our last breath practise these acts of distrust in ourselves and confidence in God, and should always beseech the Lord to grant us holy humility.

6. But, in order to be humble, it is not sufficient to have a lowly opinion of ourselves, and to acknowledge all our misery. He that is truly humble, says St. Thomas a Kempis, despises himself and wishes to be despised by others. This is what Jesus Christ desires we should do after his example.—Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart. (Matt. xi. 29.) He who says he is the greatest sinner in the world and who gets angry when he is despised, has humility on his tongue but not in his heart. St. Thomas of Aquin says, that he who feels affronts, although he should

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work miracles, is yet far removed from perfection. When St. Ignatius of Loyala was instructing St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi in humility, he said to her: humility consists in rejoicing at every thing that makes us despise ourselves. Observe this word, *rejoicing;* if, then, the inferior part of our nature should feel displeasure at insults, the superior and spiritual part should rejoice at them.

7. How can we love Jesus Christ, or consider the sufferings and injuries he has endured, (Matt. xxvi. 67.) and not love to be despised? It is, moreover, to teach us humility, that Jesus Christ wishes to be exposed on our altars, not in external triumph and glory, but on a cross, in order that we may have always before our eyes the ignominious condition to which he was reduced. This reflection filled the saints with joy whenever they were treated with contempt. Jesus Christ, with the cross on his shoulders appeared one day to St. John of the Cross, who said to him: Lord, since you have endured so much ignominy for the love of me, I make no other request but to suffer and be despised for the love of you.

8. St. Francis of Sales said, that the patient endurance of insults is the touchstone of humility and true virtue. If a person that professes to be pious, that is addicted to mental prayer, to frequent communion, fasting, and mortification, cannot bear an affront or a severe word, what are we to think of him? That he is an empty vessel without humility, and without virtues. How can a soul exist that loves Jesus Christ, and that will not suffer some contempt for the love of him who has endured so much for it? As long as you dread humiliations so much, says the author of

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the *Imitation*, you shew that you are not dead to the world, that you have not humility, and that you do not take the Saviour as your model. If we have no blows or wounds to suffer for God, let us, at least, bear a few words for his sake.

9. What scandal does not a person give who communicates often, and who is angry at the smallest disrespectful word! On the other hand, how much are we not edified at him, who replies to injurious expressions in mild language, in order to appease him who has offended him, or who neither replies nor complains, but preserves a serene and unalterable countenance! St. John Chrysostom says, that the humble man is not only useful to himself, but to others, on account of the good example of meekness under insult, which he affords them. But, when and how should we be humble? *The Imitation* mentions some cases in which we should especially practise humility. A person listens to the conversation of others, and despises yours; the requests of others are granted, and whatever you ask is refused; others will be praised by every one, and no one will talk of you. Others will be promised situations, and you will be found good for nothing. Behold the proofs to which the Lord subjects the faithful servant, to see whether he can subdue himself and remain in peace. Nature will be sometimes disturbed, but if you bear all in silence, you will gain exceedingly.

10. St. Jane de Chantal says, that the truly humble person humbles himself still more, in proportion as he is humbled. Yes, because he never thinks he is humbled as much as he deserves. Those who act thus are called blessed by Jesus

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Christ. He does not call those blessed, who are esteemed, honoured, or praised for being noble, learned, or powerful, but those who are abused, persecuted, and calumniated by men: because, if they suffer all this patiently, he has prepared a great reward for them in heaven. Matt. v. 11, 12.

11. We should particularly practise humility when a superior or any one else reproves us for some fault. There are persons, who like hedgehogs, seem calm and quiet when they are not touched, but who, if reproved by a superior or a friend for some fault, are immediately roused, deny the fact or pretend to justify themselves. They look upon any one that apprises them of their faults as an enemy, and are like those who are angry with the surgeon who probes their wound. He that is humble and holy, says St. Chrysostom, humbles himself when he is corrected and bewails his error; the proud man also mourns, but it is because his fault is discovered; hence, he is troubled, and replies angrily to him that admonishes him. St. Philip Neri said, that he who really wishes to become a saint should never excuse himself, even when the charge is false. We must, however, except those cases in which an explanation is necessary, in order to remove scandal. How much merit does not one acquire in the sight of God, who, after being unjustly reproved is silent and offers no excuse! St. Teresa said, that we sometimes advance more in the way of perfection by not excusing ourselves, than in hearing ten sermons; because by not excusing ourselves we begin to acquire liberty of spirit and to feel no trouble, whether we are well or ill spoken of.

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AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O Incarnate Word, by virtue of your sacred humility, the virtue which made you embrace so many ignominies and insults for the love of us, I beseech you to deliver me from pride, and to grant me a portion of your humility. How can I complain of the insults I receive—I, who have so many times deserved hell? Ah, my Jesus! through the merits of all those insults to which you were exposed during your passion, grant me the grace to live and die like you in profound humility on earth. I desire for the love of you to see myself despised and abandoned by the whole world; but without you I can do nothing. I love you, O my Sovereign Good! I love you, O the dearly-beloved of my soul! I love you, and I am resolved with the assistance of your grace to suffer every thing for your love; insult, treachery, persecutions, pains, aridities, dejections, every thing, in fine, provided you, yourself, do not abandon me, O the only beloved of my soul! Do not permit me to be ever separated from you; grant me the desire of pleasing you, a fervent love, peace in sufferings, and resignatioa in adversity. Have mercy on me; I have deserved nothing, but I hope for every thing from you, who have redeemed me by your precious blood. I hope in you also, O Mary! my queen, and my mother! you who are the refuge of sinners.

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CHAPTER X.

CHARITY IS NOT AMBITIOUS.

He that loves Jesus Christ desires nothing but Jesus Christ.

1. He that loves Jesus Christ does not seek to be loved or esteemed by men; all that he desires is to be pleasing in the sight of God, who is the only object of his love. St. Hilary declares, that all worldly honour is the business of the devil. (In Matt. vi.) The enemy is labouring for hell when he suggests to a soul the desire of being esteemed; because when once the soul has lost humility she is in danger of falling into all misfortunes. St. James assures us, that the Lord gives grace to the humble, and resists the proud; (iv. 6.) that is, that he does not even hear their prayers. Now, the desire of being esteemed by men and feeling complacency in the honours bestowed by them, are undoubtedly the effect of pride.

2. Can we read without horror, what happened to brother Justin of the Order of St. Francis, in consequence of having cherished the desire of being esteemed by men? This brother had arrived to such an eminent degree of perfection, that Pope Eugenius IV. conceiving a high opinion of his sanctity, sent for him, received him with respect, embraced him, and made him sit down near him. Justin became so proud of this remarkable favour, that his abbot, St. John Capistran, said to him: at your departure you were an angel, but on your return you are no more than a devil! His pride increased every day; he wished that every one should highly esteem him; at length

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he murdered one of his brethren with a stroke of a knife, he apostatised, and flew to Naples, where he committed other crimes, and died at length on a gibbet impenitent. Hence, a great servant of God, said with reason, that when we hear of the fall of certain cedars of Libanus, such as a Solomon, a Tertullian, an Osius, whom every one looked on as saints, we should look upon it as a proof that they were not entirely given to God, that they nourished within their hearts some sentiments of pride, and that thus they prevaricated. Let us tremble when we feel within ourselves any desire of being seen and esteemed by the world; and when the world pays us any respect, let us be careful to take no complacency in it; for this, perhaps, would be the cause of our fall.

3. Let us above all not be wedded to those pretended points of honour. St. Teresa said, that whoever is addicted to them will never be truly spiritual. Many persons profess to lead a spiritual life; but they are at the same time, idolaters of their own esteem; they have the appearance of virtue, but in reality, have a desire of being praised for every thing they do; they praise themselves if they are not praised by others; in a word, they wish to appear better than others; and if their reputation be affected in the least, they are disturbed, they abandon communion, and all their pious exercises, and give themselves no rest until they think they have recovered their character. But those who truly love God do not act in this manner; they not only avoid every thing that would elicit the praise of others, but they are grieved when they receive any, and rejoice when they are despised.

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4. St. Francis of Assisium said, I am nothing more than what I am in the sight of God. Of what use will it be to be esteemed, if God thinks differently of us? What matter if the world despises us, provided God loves us? (St. Aug. l. 3. Contra. Pel.) The praises of men cannot deliver us from the punishment due to our sins, and their abuse cannot deprive us of the merit of our good works. Why need we be troubled, said St. Teresa, for being accused and despised by the creature, if we are great and faultless in your eyes, O my God? The saints desired nothing so much as to live in obscurity and contempt. What harm does the bad opinion of another do to us? It is the opinion which each of us should have of himself. We ought to know that we are wicked, and yet we pretend that others should think us good.

5. The hidden life procures great advantages for those who desire to love Jesus Christ from their whole hearts. The Lord himself wished to give us an example of this by spending the first thirty years of his life in a carpenter's shop; the saints retired to the desert to shun the esteem of men. St. Vincent of Paul said, that the desire of being spoken to with respect, of having our conduct praised, and of having it said that we succeed admirably in our undertakings, is an evil which makes us forget God, which poisons our most holy actions, and prevents more than any thing else, our advancement in a spiritual life.

6. If we, therefore, desire to increase in the love of Jesus Christ, we should destroy the love of our own esteem. But in what manner? St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi teaches us, the life of the desire of being esteemed, consists in enjoying

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a good reputation with every one; its death, therefore, consists in concealing ourselves so as that no one may know us. The nearer we are to this death, the more truly will we be the servants of God.

7. To render ourselves agreeable in the eyes of God, we should renounce the desire of shew and of pleasing men, but above all, the desire of ruling others. St. Teresa would sooner see her monastery on fire, with all her nuns, than behold this cursed ambition enter the community. She wished that if there was ever found in any of her convents a religious who aspired to be superioress, that she should either be banished from the convent, or shut up for ever. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said, a spiritual person's honour consisted above all in taking the last place, and having a horror of being preferred to others. The entire ambition of a soul that loves God, should be to surpass all others in humility, according to the words of the apostle. (Philip. ii. 3.) In humility let each esteem others better than themselves. In a word, he that loves God, should have nothing in view but God alone.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my Jesus, grant me the ambition of pleasing you, and inspire me with a profound forgetfulness of creatures, and of myself. Of what use will it be to me to be loved by the whole world, if I am not loved by you, who are the only love of my soul? My sweet Jesus! you have come upon earth to gain our hearts: If I do not know how to give you mine, take it yourself, fill it with your

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love, and never suffer it to be separated from you. I have offended you; but I now repent of it from my whole heart, and nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of my sins. I am consoled when I reflect that your bounty is infinite, and that you never refuse to love a sinner who loves you. Amiable Redeemer! the only love of my soul! I have despised you; but now I love you more than myself. I give myself to you without reserve. I have no other desire but to love you and to please you; receive this desire, increase it, and destroy in me all desire of earthly goods. You are too worthy of being loved, and I have too many obligations not to love you. Behold me: I wish to be entirely yours, and for your love I wish to suffer every thing you please, as you have died on a cross for the love of me. You wish that I should be holy. You can make me holy; it is in you I place all my confidence. And I hope also in your protection, O Mary, Mother of God.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARITY SEEKETH NOT HER OWN.

He that loves Jesus Christ, wishes to be disengaged from every creature.

1. He that desires to love Jesus Christ perfectly, should banish from his heart every thing that is not God, and all self-love. He not only should not seek himself, but he should seek nothing except what pleases God. This is what the Lord commands, when he says, Thou shalt love

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God from thy whole heart. (Matt. xxii. 37.) In order to love God from our whole heart, we must 1st, banish every thing earthly from our hearts; and 2d, fill them with divine love. Hence, a heart that has the smallest earthly attachment, cannot belong entirely to God. St. Philip Neri said, that the more we love the creature the less we love God. But how are we to purify our hearts from every earthly affection? By mortifications, and by disengagement from every creature. Some souls complain, that though they seek for God, they cannot find him. St. Teresa thus answers their complaints: Withdraw your hearts from creatures and seek your God: you will then find him.

2. The misfortune is, that there are persons who desire to sanctify themselves, but only after their own manner. They wish to love Jesus Christ, and at the same time to follow their own inclinations—that is, not to renounce their amusements, their vanity in dress, and the pleasures of the table. They love God; but if they do not succeed in obtaining such or such an office, they live in a state of restlessness; if their reputation be assailed, they are irritated; if they are not cured of such or such an illness, they lose patience. They love God; but they still preserve the love of riches, honours, and vanities; they wish to pass for persons of grandeur and wisdom, and of superior merit to others. Such persons pray, they frequent the sacraments, but they derive little benefit from them, because they approach with hearts full of worldly sentiments. The Lord does not even speak to them, because he sees it would be in vain, as he said one day to

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St. Teresa, "I would speak to many souls, but the world makes such a noise in their ears, that I would not be heard." Oh! if they would withdraw a little from the world. He, therefore, who is filled with worldly sentiments, cannot hear the voice of God which speaks to his heart. But, woe to him that is attached to the goods of this life! In what danger is he not of one day being totally blinded, of ceasing to love Jesus Christ, and of losing an infinite and eternal good, in order to save the fleeting goods of this world?

3. The emperor Tiberius wished that Jesus Christ should be enrolled in the number of the Gods, by the Roman senate, (St. Aug. i. 22. de cons.) but the senate refused to do so, alledging that he was a proud God, who desired to have himself alone adored, and no other. This is quite true: God wishes to be alone adored and loved by us, not through pride, but because he deserves it. As he loves us exceedingly, so he requires all our love, and will not suffer another to have any share in the affections which belong entirely to him. He wishes us to love nothing but him, and if he perceives a creature enjoy any portion of a heart, he bears it a sort of envy, as the apostle St. James says, because he admits no rivals, but desires himself alone to be loved. (James iv. 5.) The Lord calls his spouse an enclosed garden, (Cant. v.) because the soul that truly loves, closes its heart to every earthly love, in order to preserve in it the love of Jesus Christ alone. Does not Jesus Christ deserve all our love? Has he not loved us, and does he not love us exceedingly? The saints were well aware of this. St. Francis of Sales said, that if he knew

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there was but one fibre in his heart that did not belong to God, he would tear it out in a moment.

4. David wished to have wings like a dove—that is, a heart pure and disengaged from every earthly affection in order to flee into the bosom of God, and repose there. (Ps. lvi. 7.) Many souls desire also to see themselves entirely detached from earth, in order to ascend to God; and they would make great progress in virtue, if they were entirely detached from all things; but because they preserve in their hearts some little inordinate affection, which they do not strive to renounce, they continue to pine away in their misery, without ever advancing one step in the ways of perfection. St. John of the Cross said, that the soul which is affectionately attached to the most trifling object, though it should otherwise possess many virtues, will never arrive at a perfect union with God; for it matters little whether the bird is fastened by a weak or a strong thread, provided it be prevented from flying. It is lamentable to behold souls that are rich in virtues and graces, unable to arrive at a divine union, because they have not courage to renounce a trifling affection, or to make a generous effort to burst the tie which fastens them; whereas, if they did so, they would acquire an infinite treasure of graces, and God would fully communicate himself to them.

5. He who wishes that God should be totally his, should give himself entirely to God. (Cant. ii. 16.) My dearly beloved is entirely mine, and I am entirely his. Jesus Christ desires all our love, because he loves us exceedingly, and unless he possesses an entire love, he is never satisfied.

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St. Teresa wrote thus to a prioress of one of her convents: "Endeavour to produce in souls a total detachment from every creature, because they should be the spouses of a King, who is so jealous, that he wishes them to forget even themselves." St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi took away a small pious book from one of her novices, for no other reason than because she was too much attached to it: there are souls who regularly make meditation, visit the blessed sacrament, and go to communion; but because they are wedded to some earthly affection, they make little or no progress in perfection, and by continuing to live in this manner, they will be not only always miserable, but in danger of losing every thing.

6. We should therefore pray to God, like David, to purify our heart from every earthly attachment, (Ps. 1. 12.) otherwise we can never be entirely his. Jesus Christ has said, we must renounce all, in order to become his true disciple. (Luke xiv. 33.) Hence, whenever a young man presented himself to the ancient fathers of the desert, to be admitted amongst them, they first asked him: Do you bring an empty heart, that the Holy Ghost may fill it? When St. Gertrude besought the Lord to make known his will to her, he said, all that I expect from you is a heart empty of creatures. We should therefore say to God, from our whole heart: Lord I prefer you to every thing—to health, to riches, to dignities, to honours, to praises, to sciences, to comforts, to expectations, to desires, and even to the graces and benefits which I may receive from you. In a word, I prefer you to every thing that is not you, O my God! Every thing that you can bestow me will not be enough for

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me, unless it be yourself, O my God! It is you alone I desire, and nothing else.

7. When a heart is empty of creatures, the divine love comes to fill it. St. Teresa said: Turn away your eyes from dangerous occasions, and the soul will quickly turn towards God, and love him. Yes, for the soul cannot live without love; it must love either the Creator, or creatures. If it does not love creatures, it will certainly love the Creator. In a word, we must renounce all, in order to gain all. As long as St. Teresa cherished even a pure affection to one of her parents, she was not entirely given to God; but when she had thoroughly subdued this affection, she deserved to hear these words from Jesus Christ: Now Teresa, you are all mine, and I am entirely yours. Surely it is not much for our heart to love a God, who is so good and amiable as to deserve our infinite love, and yet we would divide our heart between him and creatures! The venerable Louis Dupont was ashamed to say to God: Lord, I love you above all things, above riches, honours, my parents and friends, because in his eyes it was as if he said: Lord, I love you more than dung, smoke, and the worms of the earth.

8. The Prophet Jeremy says, that the Lord is infinitely good to those who seek him; (Lam. iii. 25.) that is, to those who seek but him alone. Happy loss! fortunate victory! to lose the goods of the earth, which, without satisfying the heart, quickly pass away, and to gain an infinite and eternal good, to obtain a God! It is related, that a prince, in hunting, met a pious solitary walking in the woods, and that he asked him who he was, and whither he was going. The anchorite replied:

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What are you doing in this desert, Sir? I am pursuing animals, said the prince; and I am seeking God, replied the solitary, and went on his way. Like him, our sole and only end in this life should be to seek God, in order to love him, and accomplish his will, after having banished from our hearts all affection to creatures. When we are tempted to love worldly goods, let us say to ourselves: What are the dignities and grandeurs of the world, but dung and smoke, which disappear at death? Happy is the man that can say, my Lord Jesus Christ, I have quitted every thing for your love. I love but you alone, and you alone are sufficient for all my desires!

9. When divine love takes entire possession of a soul, she is transported out of herself by the assistance of grace, to detach herself from all earthly objects, which would prevent her from belonging entirely to God. St. Francis of Sales said, that when a house is on fire, the furniture is thrown out of the windows; that is when a person devotes himself entirely to God, he has no need of being exhorted by confessors or preachers, but labours of his own accord to divest himself of all earthly attachments. Father Segneri the younger said, that divine love happily strips us of every thing, that we may possess nothing but God. A rich man had renounced all his goods, and reduced himself to voluntary poverty for the love of Jesus Christ. When one of his friends asked him the reason, he took the book of gospels out of his pocket, and said: This is what has robbed me of all my riches. When a soul gives her entire love to God, she despises every thing—riches, pleasures, dignities, and even thrones; she wishes for nothing

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but God. She says, and incessantly repeats: my God, it is you alone I desire, and nothing more. St. Francis of Sales says, that the pure love of God consumes every thing that is not God, in order to convert every thing into the same love; for every thing that is done for the love of God is love.

10. Divine love inebriates the heart, when it takes possession of it, in such a manner, that it makes it forget all creatures. An inebriated man is, as if dead; he does not see, hear, nor speak, such is the state of a soul that is inebriated with divine love; it has no longer any sensations for the things of the world. It wishes to think of God alone, to speak of God alone, to act for God alone; in a word, it desires that all its actions and all its love should belong to God. In the sacred canticles the Lord forbids his sleeping spouse to be disturbed. (Cant. ii. 7.) Now, this sweet sleep of the soul that loves Jesus Christ, is nothing else, says St. Basil, but the voluntary and habitual forgetfulness of all creatures, in order to be occupied with God alone, and to be able to say to him with St. Francis: my God, what are the riches, the dignities, the possessions of the world! You alone, O my God, are all my treasure. Ah! if we could comprehend the force of these words, *My God and my all!* there is nothing more agreeable to him that loves than to repeat it without ceasing.

11. It is therefore necessary to be entirely weaned from creatures, in order to arrive at a perfect union with God; we should particularly renounce the inordinate love of parents. Jesus Christ has said, He that follows me, and does not hate his father, cannot be my disciple. (Luke xiv.

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26.) And why this hatred of parents? Because, very frequently there cannot be greater enemies to our soul than our relations. (Matt. x. 36.) St. Charles Borromeo was wont to say, that whenever he went to his parents he felt a great decrease of piety. When Father Antony Mendoza was asked why he did not go near his father's house, he said, it was because he knew by experience there was no place where a religious man lost his fervor more than amongst his relations.

12. When there is question of choosing a state of life, it is certain, says St. Thomas, (ii. 2. q. 10. a. 5.) that we are not bound to obey the authors of our existence. If a young man be called to a religious state, and is opposed by his parents, he should prefer the will of God to that of his parents, who would injure his spiritual good, to consult for their own personal interests, (Ibid. q. 189. a. 10.) Parents, says St. Bernard, will consent that their children should be damned, provided they do not leave their house.

13. But what is most surprising is, that fathers and mothers, who, in other respects live in the fear of God, will leave nothing undone to deprive their child of his vocation, if he be called to a religious state. Nevertheless, except in some very rare cases, they cannot be excused from mortal sin. But some one will say: Could not this young man be saved unless he enters a religious life? Or, are all who remain in the world lost? I answer, that those who are not called to the religious state, can be saved in the world, by discharging the duties of their state; but that those who are called to religion, and who do not obey the voice of God, may indeed be saved, but with

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the greatest difficulty, because they will not have the special assistance which the Lord had prepared for them in the religious state, and without which they cannot be saved. The theologian Habert declares, that he who does not embrace the state to which he is called, is in the church like a member out of its place; and that therefore it is with the greatest difficulty he can comply with his duties, and save his soul. De Ord. c. i. 2.

14. The choice of a state of life, is called the mainspring by Father Grenada. When the mainspring of a clock is out of order, the entire becomes deranged. In like manner, if a person fails in his vocation, his whole life is disorderly. How many poor creatures have lost their vocation, made a bad end, and became the ruin of their families, to please their parents? A certain young man would not become a religious, in order to please his father; but having afterwards an altercation with him, he slew him with his own hands, and perished under the executioner. Another young man who was placed in a seminary, was called to a religious life. He did not correspond with his vocation, he gradually abandoned his pious exercises, and at length became a debauch. One night, when he was coming out of the house of a woman of bad character, he was slain by a rival. The priests hearing his cries for help, ran to his assistance, but he was already dead. How many examples of this nature might I quote?

15. St. Thomas advises those who are called to a more perfect life, not to take their parent's advice, because they would be their enemies in such a case. And if children are not bound to take the advice of their parents on their vocation, they

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are under less obligation of asking or waiting for their permission, particularly when they have reason to fear that they would unjustly refuse their consent, or prevent them from fulfilling their designs. St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Francis Xavier, St. Louis Beltrando, and many others, embraced a religious state, without even acquainting their parents.

16. He that wishes to belong entirely to God, should not desire to be esteemed by the world. But alas! how many are there that separate themselves from God, and even lose him altogether, in order to acquire this esteem? For instance, if they hear any one speak of their faults, what pains will they not take to excuse themselves, and to prove that it is a falsehood or a calumny? If they perform a good work, they endeavour by all means that every one should know it, in order that they may be praised. It was not thus the saints acted: they wished that every one should know their faults, that they might be considered as miserable as they seemed in their own eyes. On the other hand, they were unwilling that their virtues should be known to any one but God, whom alone they were anxious to praise. This was the reason why they loved the hidden and obscure life so much, in obedience to our Saviour, who admonishes us to give alms, and pray in secret. Matt. vi. 3. 6.

17. Above all things, we should be detached from ourselves; that is, from our own will. He who has gone so far as to subdue himself, will conquer other repugnances with little difficulty. This was the advice which St. Francis Xavier most frequently gave, because Jesus Christ has said: He that wishes to come after me, let him

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deny himself. (Matt. xvi. 24.) Behold the compendium of all we have to do to become saints—namely, to renounce ourselves, and not to follow our own will. St. Francis of Assisium says, that this is the greatest gift which we can receive from God. St. Bernard assures us, that if all mankind renounced their own will, there would be no one damned. Our own will renders even good works defective. Woe be to him who is the slave of his own will! He will desire many things which he cannot obtain, and he will be forced to suffer what is most disagreeable to him. (James iv. i. 2.) Our first enemy is the flesh; let us remove its dangerous occasions, mortify our eyes, recommend ourselves to God, and this war will cease. Our second enemy is the concupiscence of riches; let us love poverty, and this contest will be over. The third is ambition; let us love humility, and the hidden life, and this warfare will be over. The fourth and most dangerous of all our enemies is, our own will; let us resign ourselves to the will of God, and this struggle will cease. St. Bernard said, that whenever a person is troubled, it is because he cannot gratify his own will. The Lord complained of this to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and said to her: There are souls who wish to acquire my spirit, but as they do so in a manner that pleases themselves, they render themselves incapable of receiving it.

18. We should therefore love God, and love him in the manner that he pleases, and not in the way that pleases us. God wishes that the soul should be divested of all things, in order to be united to him, and filled with his love. On this subject St. Teresa says: The prayer of union

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seems to me nothing else but a total death to the things of the world, in order to relish God alone. It is certain that the more we detach ourselves from creatures for the love of God, the more he will fill us with his love, and unite us to himself. Many persons would wish to arrive at a perfect union with God, but they do not wish to suffer adversities, nor sickness, nor poverty, nor insults; yet, as long as they will not be resigned to the will of God, they will not arrive at this perfect union. St. Catharine of Genoa says, that we must suffer adversity, in order to arrive at an union with God. He sends adversity to purify us from our evil inclinations, both interior and exterior. Thus, insults, sickness, poverty, temptations, are extremely necessary to enable us to subdue our passions, and by means of those victories to extinguish within us every sentiment contrary to the law of God. As long as adversities do not appear sweet to us in the sight of God, we will not arrive at this divine union.

19. St. John of the Cross says, that we must practise an entire mortification of our senses and appetites to attain a perfect union with God. With regard to the senses, we should reject at once every pleasure which is not referable to the glory of Jesus Christ; for instance, if we have the desire to see or hear any thing that will not serve to unite us more closely to God, to renounce such curiosity. With regard to appetites, to be inclined always to what is most painful, disagreeable, and poor, desiring nothing but to suffer and to be despised. In a word, he that truly loves Jesus Christ, loses his affection for all worldly goods, and seeks to divest himself of every thing,

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to be united solely to Jesus Christ. All his desires tend to Jesus, he always thinks of Jesus, he always sighs for Jesus, and wishes at all times, and all places, and on all occasions, to please Jesus Christ alone. But to arrive at this point, we must constantly strive to banish from our hearts every affection that does not relate to God. What then should the soul do to devote itself entirely to God? It should, 1. avoid every thing that displeases him, and perform every thing that pleases him; 2. receive without exception, every thing that God sends, no matter how severe or disagreeable it may be; 3. to prefer the will of God in all things to its own. Behold, how we may entirely belong to God.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My God, and my all! I feel that, notwithstanding my ingratitude and neglect, you continue to invite me to your love. Behold me; I will no longer resist you. I renounce every thing, in order to belong to you. I renounce myself, and my own will. Ah! what have you not done, in order to make yourself loved by me! Yes, I do love you. My soul is inflamed with love for you, O my sweet Jesus! It is after you I sigh. How can I refuse to love you, after seeing you expire in pain for my salvation? How can I behold you on this tree of suffering, and not love you with my whole heart? Yes, I love you with my whole soul, and I have no other desire but to love you in this life, and during eternity. O my God! my love, my hope, my strength, and my consolation, make me faithful to your will. Enlighten me, that

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I may know what I ought to root out of my heart, and grant me grace to do so, for I wish to obey you in every thing. Divine spouse of my soul, I offer and devote myself entirely to you, to satisfy the desire which you have of being united to me, and that I may be united to you, O my God, and my all! Ah! come my Jesus, and take possession of my whole being, and fix all my thoughts and affections on you. I renounce all my inclinations, all comforts, all creatures; you alone are sufficient for me. Give me the grace to think of nothing but you, to desire nothing but you, and to labour for you alone, O my Love, and my All! And do you, O Mary! Mother of my God, obtain perseverance for me.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARITY IS NOT PROVOKED TO ANGER.

He that loves Jesus Christ, is never angry with his neighbour.

1. The virtue by which we refrain from being excited to anger, when opposed, springs from meekness. We have already spoken in the preceding chapters, of the actions which belong to meekness; but as it is a virtue which we must constantly exercise here below, we shall enter into more special and practical details.

2. Humility and meekness were the favorite virtues of Jesus Christ; hence, he has desired us to learn from him to be meek and humble. Our Redeemer was called a Lamb, both on account of the sacrifice of the cross, and also for the extra-

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ordinary meekness which he displayed during life, and particularly at his passion. When he received a blow before Caiphas, and was treated as an impudent person, Jesus made only this reply: If I have spoken evil, prove it; but if well, why dost thou strike me? (John xviii. 23.) Jesus practised this meekness, even unto death. Whilst he was on the cross, was insulted, and heard his holy name blasphemed, he prayed to God his Father, to pardon his enemies. Luke xxiii. 34.

3. Oh! how agreeable to Jesus are humble and meek hearts, which know how to bear insults, derision, calumny, and even blows and wounds, without getting into a passion with those who insult and strike them! (Judith ix. 16.) The prayer of the meek is always agreeable to God; that is, it is always heard. God particularly promises heaven to the meek. (Matt. v. 4.) Father Alvarez says, that heaven is the country of those who are despised and trodden under foot in this life; yes, because it is for them, and not for the proud man, who is honoured and esteemed by the world, that the possession of the eternal kingdom is reserved. David says, that the meek will not only enjoy a blissful eternity, but that in this life they will taste an unalterable peace. (Ps. xxxvi. 11.) The saints feel no resentment against those who ill-treat them, but love them more than before, and as the reward of their patience, the Lord increases their interior peace. When any one speaks ill of me, says St. Teresa, I seem to have a new affection for him. We read in the acts of her canonization, that injuries were passports to her love. No one can acquire such meekness as this, without having great humility, a lowly opinion of himself, and a

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conviction that he is worthy of all contempt. For why is the proud man always passionate and vindictive? Because he has a high opinion of himself, and imagines himself worthy of all honour.

4. We must, therefore, die in the Lord, in order to be happy, (Apoc. xiv. 13.) and to begin to taste happiness in this life. This happiness, which we may enjoy on earth, although far inferior to that of heaven, exceeds, nevertheless, all the pleasures of sense, said the apostle to his disciples. (Phil. iv. 7.) But, in order to obtain this peace, even in the midst of affronts and calumnies, we must be dead in the Lord. A dead man feels no bad treatment. Thus, he that is meek should suffer all insults, like a dead man, who has no sight, and is insensible. The true lover of Jesus Christ attains this state, because, being entirely resigned to his holy will, he receives prosperity and adversity, consolations and afflictions, injuries and kindness, with the same peace and tranquillity of soul. It was thus the apostle acted when he said: I over abound with joy in the midst of my tribulations. (Cor. vii. 14.) Happy is he that arrives at this degree of virtue! He enjoys a continual peace, one much more precious than all the goods of the world. St. Francis of Sales said, what is the whole world when compared with peace of mind? And, in reality, of what use are all the riches and honours of the world to him that leads a restless life, and whose heart is not at peace?

5. To remain always united to Jesus Christ, we should preserve in all things our peace of mind, and not suffer ourselves to be disturbed by any adversity that may befal us. (3 Kings xix. 11.)

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The Lord does not dwell in a troubled heart. Let us hear the beautiful lessons of meekness which St. Francis of Sales gives us. Never put yourself into a passion, said he, and never permit anger to enter your heart, under any pretext whatsoever; for, when once it has entered, we no longer have it in our power to banish or moderate it at our pleasure. The remedies are: 1. to repress it immediately by thinking on something else, and keeping silence. 2. In imitation of the apostles, when they beheld the sea disturbed by the storm, to have recourse to God, to whom it belongs to purify hearts. 3. If you have had the misfortune to allow anger to enter into your soul, do every thing in your power to make yourself calm; then humble yourself, and speak mildly to those with whom you were angry; do all this gently, and without violence, for it is of great importance not to irritate wounds. The same saint said, that he had great difficulty in surmounting two of his predominant passions, anger and love. With regard to the first, he declared that it cost him twelve year's struggles to subdue. He changed the object of the second, by weaning his heart from creatures to devote all his love to God. By this means the saint acquired so profound an interior peace, that it always appeared in his invariably serene countenance.

6. When one gets into a passion, he hopes to relieve himself by shewing it in his words and actions; but this only increases the confusion. We must carefully guard against ill humour, in order to preserve continual peace; if we sometimes feel disposed to be ill tempered, we should quickly banish it by agreeable reading, or a hymn, or

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conversation. The Holy Ghost says, (Eccl. viii. 10,) that anger finds a place in the heart of a fool, who has little love for Jesus Christ, and remains there for a long time; but if it secretly creeps into the heart of a wise man, he expels it at once. A soul that truly loves Jesus Christ is never in ill humour, because having no other will but that of God, it always possesses what it desires, and of course is always at peace. The will of God soothes it in all its adversities, and thus it is always meek and affable to every one. But this meekness cannot be obtained without a great love for Jesus Christ. In reality, experience teaches us, that we are never more charitable to others, than when we feel most love and tenderness for Jesus Christ.

7. But a person may say: It is sometimes necessary to speak with severity, in order to check insolence. David says: Be angry and sin not. (Ps. iv. 5.) It is, therefore, sometimes lawful to be angry, provided it be without sin. But here is the difficulty. In speculation it appears proper at times to make a vehement reply to some persons to bring them to a sense of their duty; yet in practice it is most difficult to do so without some fault on our part. Hence, the surest way is to admonish and reply always with meekness, and to be on our guard against passion. St. Francis of Sales declares, that he never gave himself up to anger, that he did not afterwards repent it. Let us profit by this acknowledgment: and when we find our passion rising, the surest plan is to be silent, to defer our advice or answer to another and more fitting time; that is, when the agitation of our hearts shall have ceased.

8. We should particularly exercise meekness,

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when we are reproved by our superiors or friends. St. Francis of Sales says, that he who is docile to correction, proves that he loves those virtues that are contrary to the faults for which he is reprehended, and that he is making a progress in perfection. We must also be meek to ourselves. The devil gives us to understand that it is commendable to get into a passion with ourselves, when we commit some fault; but he only wishes thereby to disturb our souls, and to render us incapable of doing good. St. Francis of Sales said on this subject: Be persuaded that all those thoughts which give us trouble do not come from God, who is the Prince of Peace, but spring either from the devil, or self-love, or the too great opinion which we have of ourselves. Behold the three sources of all our troubles. Hence, we should reject and despise these thoughts whenever they occur.

9. We never stand in greater need of meekness than when we are obliged to reprove others. Corrections made with a bitter zeal, are often more injurious than useful, particularly if the person corrected be in anger: we should wait till his anger cools. We should moreover abstain from reproving others when we are in ill humour ourselves, because the offender finding himself bitterly reproved, will make no account of a reprimand which is made through passion. This rule concerns the good of our neighbour. With regard to our own, let us prove that we love Jesus Christ, by enduring ill treatment, injuries and insults, with peace and joy.

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O my sweet Jesus, the joy of my soul, you who were the sport of men's fury and contempt, may your example render the contempt and injuries of the world amiable in our eyes! I promise you to suffer henceforth all kinds of outrage for the love of you. Give me the grace to execute so good a resolution. Make me know and practise your entire will. My God and my All! I desire no other good beyond you, who are an infinite good. Do you who are so much concerned for my interests, grant that I may have no concern but that of pleasing you. Grant that all my study may be to avoid every thing that offends you, and to please you in all things. Remove me from every occasion that would wean me from your love. I divest myself of my liberty, and consecrate it to you for ever. I love you, O infinite goodness! I love you, O my dearly-beloved! Incarnate word, I love you more than myself. Have mercy on me, and heal the wounds which sin has inflicted on my soul. I resign myself entirely to you, O my Jesus! I desire to belong to you alone, and to suffer every thing for you. I desire no other good but you. Holy Virgin, Mother of my Saviour, and my Mother, O Mary! I love you, and place all my confidence in you; assist me by your powerful intercession.

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CHAPTER XIII.

CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL, REJOICES NOT AT INIQUITY, BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH.

He that loves Jesus Christ, desires nothing but what Jesus Christ wills.

1. CHARITY is always united to truth; and as it knows that God is the only true God, it abhors iniquity, which is contrary to his divine will, and takes complacency only in the will of God. This is the reason why the soul that loves, thinks very little of what is said concerning itself, and has no thought but that of pleasing the Lord. No one is more highly esteemed in the sight of God than he who is engaged in consulting for truth, and who makes no account of what men think or act in his regard.

2. We have said above, that all the sanctity and perfection of a soul consists in an entire renunciation of ourselves, and in following the will of God alone. This truth should be developed. If we wish then to sanctify ourselves, let us never follow our own will, but always that of God; for all divine precepts and counsels are substantially comprised in doing and suffering every thing that God wills, and in the manner that he wills. Let us beseech the Lord to grant us holy liberty of spirit, a liberty that will induce us to embrace every thing that pleases Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all the repugnance of self-love, or of human respect. The love of Jesus Christ places us in a total indifference; sweet or bitter, all is equal. We desire nothing that pleases ourselves, we wish

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every thing that pleases God. We engage with the same satisfaction in small things and great, in things that are agreeable and the contrary; provided it be pleasing to God, every thing is good.

3. St. Augustine says, love God, and do what you please. He that truly loves God seeks for nothing else but to please God, and his whole delight is to serve him faithfully. He that desires only to gratify the dear object of his love, says St. Teresa, wishes for every thing that affords him pleasure. Such is the force of perfect love, that it makes us forget our personal advantages and comforts, in order to think of nothing but pleasing and honoring the object of our love. All our misfortune, O my God! is, that we love you too little. Ah! if in all our ways we only had you in view, we would soon arrive at the end of our journey; but we fall, we stumble every instant, nay, we wander from our way, because we do not consider the true way. Thus, the only object of all our thoughts, actions, desires, and prayers, should be to please God; and the way that leads to perfection is to follow in all things the will of God.

4. It is God's will that each of us should love him from our whole heart. Now, we love Jesus Christ from our whole heart, when we say to him sincerely with the apostle: *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* I am ready to perform it. We may be assured that when we wish what God wills, we are desiring our own greatest good; for God wishes every thing that is profitable to us. St. Vincent of Paul said, conformity to the will of God, is the treasure of a christian and the remedy for every evil, because it includes self-denial,

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union with God, and all virtues. Behold, then, the compendium of perfection. The Saviour has said, that a hair of our head does not fall without the divine will; that is, that he amply repays us for every thing we think or suffer in conformity to his holy will, and for the purpose of pleasing him. St. Teresa says, that the Lord never sends us an affliction that he does not reward by some favor, if we accept it with resignation.

5. But our conformity to the divine will ought to be entire, unreserved, constant, and uninterrupted. Behold the summit of perfection, and what ought to be the object of all our actions—of all our desires, and all our prayers. In reading of the raptures and ecstacies of St. Teresa, St. Philip Neri, and other saints, we sometimes desire to attain these supernatural unions. These desires are contrary to humility, and should be rejected. If our will be entirely united to that of God, we will become saints. We are deceived, said St. Teresa, when we imagine that a union with God, consists in exstacies, raptures, and interior consolations. This union consists in submitting our will to that of God, in such a manner that every thing in us may be directed by the will of God. This is the true and essential union, which I have always desired, and which I constantly prayed for to the Lord. We often say, Lord, I consecrate to thee my entire will, I will nothing but what thou willest; but if any thing contrary befals us, we know not how to be resigned to the will of God; we complain that all misfortunes are our lot, and we make ourselves miserable.

6. If, in all our adversities, we were perfectly

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resigned to the divine will, we would sanctify ourselves, and become the happiest of men. Let us, then, strive with all our care to make ourselves reconciled with whatever may happen, whether it be agreeable or otherwise, according to the advice of the Holy Ghost. (Eccles. v. 11.) We may perceive some, that like weathercocks are changed by every wind; they are pleasant and gay in prosperity, impatient and sad in adversity. They never arrive at perfection, and their lives are wretched, because adversities are more frequent than prosperity. St. Dorothy said, that a great means of preserving peace of mind is to receive every thing that God sends us with the same equanimity. The ancient fathers of the desert were neither passionate or sad, because they received every thing that happened them with joy, and as coming from the hands of the Lord. Happy is he that lives in an entire conformity with the divine will! He is neither elated by success, nor cast down by misfortune. He knows that all proceed equally from God. The will of God being the sole rule of his desires, he does only what God wills, and desires only what God does. He does not undertake too many things, but labours to do well that which he knows to be agreeable to God. Thus, he prefers the most trivial obligations of his state to the greatest and most glorious actions, because he sees that self-love may have a share in the latter, whilst he knows that the former are certainly pleasing to God.

7. We shall be happy if we submit to every thing that God disposes concerning us, without considering whether it be agreeable to us or not. St. Jane Frances said, when shall we arrive at

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such a degree of perfection as to receive every thing that happens us without regard to any thing but God's will, who sends us prosperities and adversities through love, and for our greater good? When shall we abandon ourselves entirely into the arms of our heavenly Father, who loves us so much, and leave him the care of our souls and our affairs, without reserving any thing to ourselves, save the desire of pleasing him? The friends of St. Vincent of Paul were wont to say, that Mr. Vincent was always Vincent, because he retained the same serenity and meekness, under all circumstances. He was so entirely given up to God, that he feared nothing, and wished only for what was pleasing to God. It is this holy abandonment, said St. Teresa, that produces that delightful liberty of spirit, which is enjoyed by perfect souls, and which procures them all the bliss that we can desire in this life; because when one fears nothing, and wishes for nothing in the world, he possesses every thing.

8. Many persons, on the other hand, accommodate sanctity to their inclinations; if they are melancholy, they seek solitude; if they have a taste for an active life, they devote themselves to preaching, to business; if they are of a sour humour, they practice austerities and mortifications, if they are fond of liberality, they give alms. Others devote themselves to vocal prayers or to pilgrimages, and make all their sanctity consist in these pious exercises. Exterior works are the fruits of the love, which we entertain for Jesus Christ; but true love consists in an entire renunciation of ourselves, and a total conformity to the will of the Lord. We then choose only what is

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most agreeable to God, and for no other reason but because he desires it.

9. A person may say, that he wishes to serve God; but it is in such an employment, in such a place, under such circumstances, and with such persons as are agreeable to him; otherwise he will abandon the task, or not perform it with good will. Such a person has no liberty of spirit, but is the slave of self-love. He acquires little merit, he lives in uneasiness because he is attached to his own will, and he finds the yoke of Jesus Christ heavy. Those who truly love Jesus Christ love only that which pleases him, and because it pleases him; they love it at the time, in the place and manner that Jesus Christ wishes, whether they are occupied in mean or honorable employments, whether they are placed in a brilliant or obscure situation. Behold what the true love of Jesus Christ produces; a love that we should seek at all price, by combating the inclinations of self-love, which desires only those occupations that are glorious, or suited to its taste. Of what use will it be to be loaded with honours and riches in this world, contrary to the will of God? The blessed Henry said, I would rather be a vile insect, if such was the will of God, than a seraphim by my own will.

10. Many will say on the day of judgment: Lord, have I not prophesied, cast out devils, and wrought wonderful works in your name? But the Lord will reply to them—Depart; you have never been my disciples—it was your self-love and not my will, that you followed upon earth. This advice is particularly addressed to those priests who labour much for the salvation of souls, but who always remain in their own imperfections.

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Perfection consists, 1. in a true contempt of ourselves; 2. in an entire mortification of our own will: in a perfect conformity to the will of God. He who does not possess these three virtues is outside the way of perfection. Hence, a great servant of God was wont to say, that it was better to propose the will of God as the end of his actions, than his glory; because in doing his will, we likewise promote his glory: whereas, in desiring to labour for the glory of God we frequently deceive ourselves, and do our own will under the pretence of the glory of God. St. Francis of Sales observes, that many persons say to God: Lord I give myself to you entirely without reserve; but that there are few who really do so. This total surrender of ourselves into the hands of God consists in receiving with a certain indifference, all the events which divine Providence ordains, afflictions, as well as consolations, contempt and insults, as well as honour and glory.

11. It is therefore, in adversity or sufferings, that we know whether a soul truly loves Jesus Christ. He has no real love for Christ, says Thomas a Kempis, who is not prepared to suffer every thing for his love, and to follow his will in all things. He, on the contrary, says Father Alvarez, who is resigned in sufferings, advances with great strides to perfection. What greater honour can one enjoy than to have a certainty of pleasing God! Now, we are never sure of pleasing God, except when we embrace with resignation, the crosses which he sends us. God wishes to be thanked for his benefits; but one *God be praised* in time of adversity, is better than a thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity.

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12. It is not enough to accept with resignation those adversities which come directly from God, such as sickness, want of talent, accidental losses. We must also be resigned to those which proceed but indirectly from God, and directly from man, such as persecutions, robberies, and insults, for both one and the other always come from God. Semei insulted David, and threw stones at him. But when they wanted to kill him, David said, let him speak; for the Lord permits that he should insult and abuse me, as a punishment for my sins.

13. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said, that all our prayers should have but one object—to obtain from God the grace to follow his holy will in all things. There are some souls who seek for nothing in their prayers but tender and agreeable sensations; but heroic souls, and those who wish to belong entirely to God, seek for nothing else but the knowledge of the Lord's will, and the strength to fulfil it. In order to arrive at perfect love, we must in all things submit our will to the will of God. Do not imagine, said St. Francis of Sales, that you have arrived at perfect love, as long as your will is not entirely and joyfully resigned to the will of God, even in things that are most repugnant. For, says St. Teresa, the gift that we offer to God, in presenting him our will, reduces him to humble himself and be united to us; but we can never obtain this union, unless by continual prayers, and a sincere desire of belonging entirely and without reserve to Jesus Christ.

14. O most amiable heart of my Saviour! O heart full of love for men! As you so tenderly love us, O heart, which deserves to reign entirely in our hearts, why cannot I make the whole world

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know the love you have for us, and the favours which you bestow on those souls who love you without reserve! Receive, O my sweet Jesus, the offering and sacrifice of all my will, which I make you this day. Discover to me your entire will, and with the assistance of your grace, I am prepared to accomplish it.

ON OBEDIENCE.

15. The surest way to know the will of God is to obey our superiors and directors. The will of God, said St. Vincent of Paul, is never better known than by obedience to superiors, conformably to what the Holy Ghost declares, God is better pleased with the sacrifice of our own will when it is subject to superiors, than with all others; for, in alms, austerities, and mortifications, we give to God what belongs to us; but in consecrating our will to him, we give him ourselves entire. In our alms and mortifications he receives only a part of the whole; but in our will he himself receives the entire. Thus, when we say to God, O Lord, discover to me by means of obedience, your whole will concerning me; I am ready to execute it; we have nothing more to offer him.

16. He, therefore, who is dedicated to obedience, should be weaned from his own opinion in all things. Each may have his particular opinion, says St. Francis of Sales: this is not contrary to virtue; but to be attached to these very opinions, is what is opposed to virtue. But, alas! nothing is more difficult than to be weaned from them. The number of those who give themselves entirely to God, is small, because there are few who en-

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tirely submit to obedience. Some persons are so attached to their own will, that if they are commanded by obedience to do a thing that would be otherwise agreeable to them, they perform it with reluctance and difficulty, because they seek only their own will. But it was not thus the saints acted: they were at peace only when they were obedient. St. Jane Frances said one day to her religious, that during that day they might do what they pleased; but in the evening they went to beseech her earnestly never to grant them a similar liberty, because they never felt so uncomfortable.

17. It is an error to imagine that there are more meritorious actions than those which are performed in virtue of obedience. St. Francis of Sales says, that to leave off what obedience prescribes, for the purpose of being united to God by prayer, reading or recollection, is to retire from God, in order to be united to our own will. St. Teresa adds, that he who performs a work that is really good in itself, but contrary to obedience, acts certainly through the instigation of the devil, and not by an inspiration from God, as perhaps, he may flatter himself to be the case; for, says the saint, the inspirations of God are never contrary to obedience. Hence, all that God requires of a soul determined to love him is to obey. One act performed through obedience, is better than any other imaginable, says Father Rodriguez: it is better to lift up a straw from the ground by obedience, than to perform a long meditation, or a bloody discipline, through your own will. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said, that she preferred the exercise of obedience to prayer, because, said she, I am certain therein of the will of God, which

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would not be the case in any other occupation. All the masters of a spiritual life teach, that it is better to omit an exercise of devotion through obedience, than to perform it, without obedience. The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget, that he who gave up a mortification through obedience, had double merit: that of the mortification which he wished to practise, and that of the obedience by which he omits it. The celebrated Francis Arias, went one day to visit his friend the venerable Father John of Avila, and finding him sad and pensive he enquired the reason. O how happy you are, replied he, who live under obedience, and who are certain of doing the will of God! As for me, I do not know whether it be God's will that I should go from village to village to preach the word of God, or to remain in my confessional, to hear those who present themselves. But he who lives under obedience is sure of doing in every thing the will of God, and of doing even what is most agreeable to God. What can be more consoling.

18. Obedience, to be perfect, must include the will and the judgment. The will must obey cheerfully and not by force, like slaves. The judgment must yield to that of the superior and not examine for what reason he commands us. This was the reason that St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said, that perfect obedience requires a soul without judgment. St. Philip Neri also said, that, in order to obey well, we must act without reasoning on what obedience prescribes, judging for certain that the thing commanded is the most perfect we can do, even though the contrary should be better before God.

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19. The same principles may be applied to the obedience which persons in the world owe to their spiritual Father. It is useful that they should receive from him regulations concerning their spiritual and temporal concerns; by this means they will every day perform that which is best. St. Philip Neri said, those who wish to advance in the ways of God should commit themselves to an enlightened confessor, and obey him as God; by doing so they are sure of not being accountable to the Lord for what he directs. We must credit the confessor, because God will not permit him to be deceived. Nothing disconcerts the artifices of the devil more than to follow the advice of another in good things; on the contrary, nothing is more dangerous than to guide ourselves. St. Francis of Sales, speaking in like manner of the direction of a spiritual father for walking in the ways of God, says, that it is the best of all other means which he could recommend. Seek as earnestly as you please, said the venerable Father Avila, you will never so surely discover the will of God as by this humble obedience, which has been so much recommended and so well practised by the masters of a spiritual life. The same doctrine is taught by St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, of Sienna, St. Antonius, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, Gerson, and by all theologians. St. John of the Cross goes so far as to say, that it is almost to doubt of faith to refuse assent to what the confessor says; it is pride and want of faith. Hence amongst the maxims of St. Francis of Sales, the two following are best adapted for the consolation of scrupulous souls. 1. A person who truly obeys is never lost. 2. We should be satisfied

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with being told by our spiritual father that we are in a safe condition without enquiring how. Many theologians, as Gerson, St. Antonius, Cajetan, Navarre, Sanchez, Bonacina, &c. are of opinion that a scrupulous person is bound under a weighty obligation, to act contrary to his scruples, when there is reason to fear that they will occasion him a grievous injury of soul and body, such as the loss of health or spirits. Hence the scrupulous should feel more remorse for not obeying their confessor, than for acting in opposition to their scruples. Thus, to conclude this chapter, we see that all perfection consists, 1. In renouncing ourselves, and our own will. 2. In following the will of God in all things. 3. In beseeching God continually to give us strength to execute both one and the other.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Amiable Jesus! Divine Redeemer of my soul! since you have come down from heaven to give yourself entirely to me, what ought I seek on earth or in heaven but you, O my God, (Ps. lxii. 12.) who art the sovereign good, the only good worthy of being loved? Be, therefore, the sole master of my heart; possess it entire; may my soul love only you, may it neither obey nor seek to please any one but you. I do not envy others the riches of the earth, it is you alone I desire. You are, and will be my treasure in this life, and during eternity. I bestow you, O my Jesus! all my heart, and all my will; it was one time a rebel against you, but I now consecrate it entirely to you. Make your will known to me, and I am

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ready to execute it, by the assistance of your grace. Dispose entirely of me, and of every thing that belongs to me; I accept beforehand, with perfect resignation, every thing you shall please to send me. O God, infinitely amiable! you have loved me so much as to die for me. I love you with my whole heart, I love you more than myself, and I surrender my soul into your hands. I this day renounce all love of the world, I abandon the creature, and I give myself entirely to you, O my Creator! Ah! by the merits of your passion, receive me, and make me faithful unto death. Henceforth, O my Jesus! I desire to live only for you—to love you alone. I desire to seek nothing but to do your will. Assist me by your grace. And you, O Mary! my hope, do not refuse me your protection.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARITY BEARETH ALL THINGS.

He that loves Jesus Christ, suffers every thing for Jesus Christ, and particularly sickness, poverty, and insults.

1. We have spoken in chapter v. of the virtue of patience in general. We shall here explain certain circumstances in which this virtue should be practised.

Father Alvarez says, that a christian should never imagine he has made any progress in a spiritual life, if, in memory of all that Jesus Christ has suffered, he does not also suffer with loving patience, pains, insults and poverty. Pains and

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sickness endured with patience, procure us great merit. St. Vincent of Paul says, that if we knew the precious treasure which is found in sickness, we would receive it with the same joy that we receive the greatest benefits. In the midst of the sharpest pains of a continual infirmity, he never complained, but preserved all his tranquillity, and seemed to have no illness. O how edifying is a sick person, who bears his illness in this manner! When St. Francis of Sales was ill, he simply explained its nature to the physicians, faithfully took all the remedies which they prescribed, no matter how unpleasant, and never complained of what he suffered. What a lesson, for those, who, on the least illness, never cease complaining to every one, and wish that their parents and friends should remain around them, to sympathize with their sufferings. St. Teresa said to her nuns: Learn to suffer something for the love of Jesus Christ, without letting your companions perceive it. Father Louis Dupont was, by the special favour of the Lord, attacked one Good Friday with so many pains, that there was no part of his body without its peculiar torment. He mentioned it to one of his friends, but he had no sooner done so, than he repented of it, and made a vow never to inform any one of what he would suffer for the future.

2. I have said, by a special favour, because the saints consider the infirmities and pains which God sends them, as favors. One day, when St. Francis of Assisium was all in agony on his bed, his assistant said to him: Pray to God, my father, to assuage your pains, and not to lay his arm so heavily upon you. At these words, the saint got

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out of his bed, went on his knees, and thanked God for all he suffered. He then said to his companion: Unless I thought you spoke through simplicity, I would never wish to see your face again.

3. But one may say, it is not my sickness that gives me so much trouble. It is that I cannot go to the house of God to perform my devotions, to receive communion, to hear mass—I cannot assist in choir, nor celebrate, nor even to pray, because my spirit is, as it were, broken down. But tell me, if you please, why do you wish to go to church, or to the choir? Why do you wish to go to communion, to celebrate or to hear mass? Is it not to please God? But it is net now pleasing to him that you should recite your office or communicate, or hear mass; he wishes that you should remain patiently on your bed, and suffer this infirmity. But all this does not satisfy you—therefore, you do not seek to please God, but yourself. Father Avila wrote to a priest, who was making complaints like these: My dear friend, do not be thinking now of what you would do if you were in good health; think only of remaining sick, because such is the pleasure of the Lord. If you seek to do the will of God, what matter is it whether you are sick or well?

4. You are not able to pray; that is, you cannot meditate. But can you not make acts of resignation to the will of God? Now, what more delightful prayer could you offer, than to embrace with love this cross, which it has pleased God to send you? You will thereby imitate St. Vincent of Paul, who, when he was dangerously ill was satisfied with placing himself in the presence of

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God, and without forcing himself to apply to any particular point, made from time to time, acts of love, confidence, thanksgiving, and still oftener, of resignation, particularly when his pains increased. St. Francis of Sales said, that tribulations considered in themselves are frightful, but considered in relation to the will of God, are lovely and delightful. You cannot pray; but what better prayer than to cast your eyes from time to time on the crucifix, and to offer up the pains which you endure, in union with the immense sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross?

5. A saint was suffering violent torments; some one presented her with a crucifix, and told her to pray to God to be delivered from her pains. What, replied she, do you wish that I should come down from the cross whilst I hold a crucified God in my hand? I desire to suffer for the love of him, who had a longing desire to suffer for me much greater torments than I endure. This is precisely what Jesus Christ said to St. Teresa one day, that she was dangerously ill. He appeared to her, covered over with wounds, and said to her: Behold, my daughter, what I have suffered for you. See if your pains can be compared to mine. From this time the saint was wont to say, when she had any infirmity: When I think of the many ways that our Lord has suffered, he that was altogether innocent, I know not how I can complain of my sufferings. St. Lidwine had to suffer a great many infirmities during thirty-eight years; fever, gout in her hands and feet, quinsey, sores over all her body; but as she had always before her eyes the sufferings of Jesus Christ, she was always cheerful and happy. When St. Joseph the Franciscan,

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having to undergo a very painful operation, was advised to be tied, lest the great pain should make him restless, he took the crucifix, and cried out: Behold him that ties me and binds me to suffer in peace all manner of pains for his love, and he bore the operation without a murmur. St. Jonas, martyr, having been placed for a whole night on the ice, by command of a tyrant, said next morning, that he had never spent an easier night, because he had never ceased contemplating Jesus Christ upon the cross, and because his sufferings, compared to those of his Saviour appeared to be rather pleasures than sufferings.

6. What a fund of merit may not one acquire, by suffering infirmities with patience! God shewed Father Alvarez one day, the glory he had prepared for a good religious, on account of an illness which she had suffered with patience, and gave him to understand that she had acquired more merit in eight months from this illness, than other religious in many years. Pains and sickness received with patience, serve to form the crown prepared by God for us in heaven. This was revealed to St. Lidwine. After all the sufferings of which we have spoken before, this saint desired to suffer martyrdom for Jesus Christ. One day that she was sighing after this favour, she beheld a beautiful crown, but which was not entirely finished. She understood that it was for her it was prepared, and therefore, desiring its completion, she prayed to God to increase her sufferings. He was pleased to hear her prayer; soldiers came, who abused and cruelly beat her. She then saw an angel holding the crown, which was quite finished, and was informed by him, that her last sufferings had

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added to it some precious stones, which were wanted to complete it, and in a short time after she expired.

7. Certain it is, that sufferings and ignominies are exceedingly sweet and agreeable to those souls who ardently love Jesus Christ. It was through this love that the martyrs endured the rack, the iron hooks, and other torments, together with death itself. St. Procopius, during his martyrdom, said to the tyrant: Torment me as much as you please, but know that there is nothing more agreeable to him that loves Jesus Christ, than to suffer for his love. The martyr, St. Gordian, said to the tyrant that threatened him with death: You threaten me with death, and I am sorry not to be able to die more than once for Jesus Christ my Saviour. Did these saints speak in this manner, because they were insensible to torments, or of a weak understanding? No such thing, replies St. Bernard, they were neither of weak mind, nor insensible to suffering, but they loved God, and they believed that it was advantageous to them to lose all, and suffer all, even death itself, for the love of God.

8. It is in time of sickness especially, that we should be ready to accept death, and any kind of death which it shall please God to send us. We must die; some malady must end our days; but we know not what this last sickness will be. Hence, in each sickness we should prepare ourselves for death, as if it were to be the last of our life. But a person will say, I have committed many sins, and I have not done penance. I wish to live for the sole purpose of satisfying the justice of God before I die. But how do you know

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whether by remaining alive you will do penance, and not become more wicked than before? Now, you may hope that God has forgiven you; what greater penance can there be than to accept death with resignation, if such be the will of God? St. Aloysius died at the age of twenty-three: he became resigned to death by this reflection: I am now, I trust, in the grace of God, and I know not what would become of me for the future. Hence I die content, if it should please the Lord to take me out of the world this moment. Father John of Avila was of opinion, that when a person was in good dispositions, although only in a moderate degree, he should wish for death, in order to be delivered from the danger which is so frequent on earth, of committing sin, and losing the grace of God.

9. Moreover, considering our natural frailty, we cannot exist without committing, at least, venial sins. This reason alone should induce us to embrace death with joy, in order not to offend God any more. In a word, if we truly love God, we should ardently desire to see him and love him with all our strength in heaven, which cannot be done perfectly on earth; but if death do not open the gate for us, we cannot enter into this country of love. It was for this reason St. Augustine cried out: Let me die, O Lord, for death alone can procure me the happiness of seeing you face to face, and of loving you for ever in heaven.

10. In the second place we should exercise patience in poverty. St. Augustine says, he who does not possess God, possesses nothing; he who has God, has every thing. Yes, he who loves God, and is united to his divine will, finds in God

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all kinds of wealth. Behold, a St. Francis, barefooted, clothed with a sack, destitute of every thing. But when he says: *My God, and my all;* he is richer than all the monarchs of the earth. There is no one poor, but he who covets goods which he does not possess; but he who covets nothing, and is happy in his indigence, is completely rich. It is of such souls St. Paul says, (2 Cor. vi. 10.) Those who truly love God, have nothing, yet possess all things; for whilst they are deprived of temporal goods, they find all their consolation and happiness in God. The saints have not only suffered poverty with patience, but they have stripped themselves of every thing, in order to live in God alone, and for God alone. If we have not the desire of renouncing all earthly goods, let us at least be satisfied with the condition in which God has placed us. Let us not seek for temporal, but eternal riches, which are infinitely more precious. Let us be convinced of this saying of St. Teresa: The less we have here on earth, the more we shall be exalted in heaven.

11. St. Bonaventure compares the abundance of temporal goods to glue, which prevents the soul from flying towards God. On the other hand, St. John Climacus says, that poverty is a means of attaining God without any obstacle. Jesus Christ says, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. To the other beatitudes he only promises heaven in time to come :but to the poor he promises in this life a heavenly joy, which is an anticipated paradise, provided they do not desire earthly goods, but are satisfied with food and raiment. (1 Tim. vii. 8.) O blessed poverty, cries out St. Laurence Justinian, which possesses nothing, and fears no-

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thing! It is always cheerful, even in abundance, knowing as it does, that whatever is troublesome and inconvenient, is advantageous to the soul. The miser is always hungry like a beggar, because the more he has, the more he covets, and he is never able to satisfy his cupidity; the poor man, on the contrary, who knows how to be contented with the little that he has, is always at ease, because as he wishes for nothing more, he possesses all he desires.

12. Jesus Christ said one day to the blessed Angela de Foligni, if poverty was not a great blessing, I would not have chosen it myself, nor left it as an inheritance to my elect. It was indeed this poverty of Jesus Christ that induced the saints to love poverty so much. The desire of riches causes the loss of a great number of souls. (1 Tim. vi. 9.) For the perishable goods of this world, they lose a God, who is an infinite and eternal good. What infatuation! St. Basil the martyr was wise, when being urged by the emperor Licinius to deny Jesus Christ, with a promise of being created high priest of the false god, he answered, that even if he should bestow him his whole empire, he never would be able to give him as much as he would take away from him, by making him lose God. God, therefore, ought to be sufficient for us. Let us be content with the goods which he sends us. Let us rejoice in our poverty, and in the privations that attend it; it is in this its merit consists. Many persons are poor; but because they do not wish to be so, they have no merit: since, according to St. Bernard, the virtue of poverty does not consist in being poor, but in loving poverty.

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13. The love of poverty is particularly necessary for religious, as they have made a vow of poverty. Many religious wish to be poor, but they also desire not to want for any thing. (St. Bern. Serm. de Adv.) so that according to the remark of St. Francis of Sales, they wish to have the honor of poverty, without its inconvenience. A religious who wishes to be poor, and yet complains when he wants any thing, is an object of derision to angels and men. The true religious love poverty more than riches. The daughter of the emperor Maximilian II. a religious of St. Clare, called sister Margaret of the Cross, having appeared in a patched garment before the archduke Albert, her brother, he could not help expressing his surprise, and saying, that such a dress was not suitable to one of her rank. But the good nun said to him: Know, brother, that I am more happy with this rag than all the monarchs of the earth with their purple. Happy is the religious, cried out St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, who being detached from all things by means of holy poverty, can say to God: O my God! you are my inheritance and all my treasure! St. Teresa having received a great amount of alms from a merchant, informed him that his name was written in the book of life, and that as a proof of this, he was to lose his temporal goods. In reality, this merchant became a bankrupt, and remained poor to the hour of his death. St. Aloysius Gonzaga said, that there was no more certain proof of our being in the number of the elect, than to preserve the fear of God in the midst of the disasters and tribulations of life.

14. It is in some respect a poverty to be deprived by death of our parents and friends.

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Hence, we should bear their death with great resignation and patience. There are some who, when they lose a parent or friend are inconsolable, retire from all society, and deliver themselves up to such an excess of sadness and impatience, that they become insupportable. I ask them, whom do they please by such conduct? Is it God? He wishes that they should be resigned to his will. Is it the souls of those whose loss they deplore? If those souls be in hell, they have a horror of them and their tears. If they be in heaven they wish that their friends should thank God for them, and if they be in purgatory, they desire that they should pray for them, should submit to the divine will, and labour for their own sanctification, in order to be reunited to them one day in heaven. Of what use then are those tears? The venerable Father Joseph Caracciolo, seeing his parents weep for one of his brothers, who had died, said to them, let us reserve our tears for a better object—to weep for the death of Jesus Christ, who has been our father, our brother, and our spouse, and who died for the love of us. Let us imitate Job, who, when they brought him word of the death of his children, said, with an entire resignation, the Lord has given them to me, and it is he who has taken them away. Such is his will, and such, of course, ought to be mine—hence blessed for ever be his holy name.

15. Finally, we should exhibit patience, and testify our love to God by suffering in peace the contempt and insults of men. When a soul devotes itself entirely to God, he suffers it to be despised and persecuted. An angel appeared one day to the blessed Henry, and said to him, Henry,

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up to this moment you have mortified yourself according to your own taste; but henceforward you will be mortified by others. Next morning the blessed man having looked from his window, saw a dog playing with an old rag, and tearing it in pieces: and at the same time heard a voice saying to him: it is thus your character will be torn by men. The blessed Henry instantly went into the street, and took up the rag, which he kept to console him in the persecutions, which were foretold to happen him.

16. The saints delighted in affronts and injuries. St. Philip Neri had suffered greatly for thirty years in the house of St. Jerom at Rome, from certain persons who resided there. On this account he would not leave it to go into another new house, whither he was invited by his disciples, and was induced to do so only by the express command of the Pope. St. John of the Cross, requiring a change of air, in consequence of the infirmity which caused his death, left a very comfortable convent—the prior of which was greatly attached to him, and chose a very poor one, where the prior was of so opposite a character, that for a long time, and very nearly till his death, he ill-treated him, and forbade the other religious to visit him. The saints eagerly seek for contempt. St. Teresa said, that he who aspires to perfection, should be careful not to say, I did not deserve this insult; because we cannot arrive at perfection, if we will only bear those crosses that are founded in justice. When St. Peter, martyr, was complaining in prison, that he had been unjustly there, our Saviour said to him, what have I done to deserve to be crucified and

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put to death for mankind? This reflection consoled the saints, under their afflictions. When St. Elzear was asked by his wife, how he could so patiently endure the injuries which were done him by his very domestics, he replied, I look at the crucifix, and I perceive that the injuries done me are nothing, in comparison to those which our Saviour has borne for my sake; and by this means God gives me strength to be resigned to every thing. Insults, poverty, sufferings, and all kinds of tribulations, serve only to remove more and more from God, a soul that does not love him; but to the soul that fully loves him, they become a more powerful inducement to unite itself to him, and to love him with greater ardour. (Cant. viii. 7.) Tribulations, no matter how great or numerous, far from extinguishing only increase the flames of charity in a heart, which loves nothing but God,

17. But why does God afflict us with so many crosses? Why does he take a pleasure in seeing us persecuted and ill-treated by men? Is God a tyrant, in being so cruel as to take delight in beholding our sufferings? No; God is neither a tyrant, nor a cruel being; but he loves us, and it is enough for us to know that he has loved us so far as to die for us. If he takes pleasure in seeing us suffer, it is for our good—in order that by suffering on earth, we may be delivered from the punishment due to our sins, which we should have to undergo in the next life. He wishes to wean us from the sensible pleasures of earth, like a mother who places bitters on her breast, in order to wean her child. He does it also, to give us an opportunity of proving our love for him, by patience and resignation. Finally, he desires that by

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sufferings we should lay up a greater treasure of merits and glory in heaven. Behold the reason why the Lord, in his love and goodness is pleased to see us suffer.

18. I conclude then by saying, that for a proper exercise of patience in tribulations, we must reflect that they come from God, either directly or indirectly through men. Hence, in our afflictions, we should thank the Lord, accept with joy and as our greatest good, every thing which he sends us, whether agreeable or painful, since all things co-operate for the good of those who love. (Rom. viii. 28.) All our sufferings will appear light, when compared with those of hell, which we have deserved. But the best means to enable us to suffer all adversities with patience, is prayer. The grace which we receive in prayer will give us the strength which we require. It was thus the saints acted; they had recourse to prayer, and they triumphed over torments and persecutions.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

I am aware, O Lord! that heaven is bestowed only on those who suffer on earth; and who suffer with patience. Grant me then, O my God, this virtue of patience, and I will be able to say with David: It is from God I have received it. (Ps. xli. 5.) I am, it is true, disposed to suffer patiently all tribulations: but when they occur I am sad and dejected, I lose all the merit of my sufferings, because I do not suffer for the love of you. O my sweet Jesus! through the merits of that patience with which you suffered for me on earth, enable me to suffer all manner of crosses for the

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love of you. I love you, O my divine Redeemer! I love you, O my sovereign good! I love you with my whole heart, and I love you more than myself, O my God, my treasure, and my love! I am sorry above all things for having offended you. I promise you to receive with patience all the afflictions and pains you shall please to send me; but it is from you I expect strength to execute this resolution, and above all, to suffer in peace the pains and agonies of death. Mary! my Queen, and my Mother! obtain for me true resignation in every thing that I have to suffer during my life, and at the hour of my death.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARITY BELIEVES ALL THINGS.

He that loves Jesus Christ, believes every thing which he has spoken.

1. A PERSON who loves, believes every thing that is said by the object of his love; hence, the greater love a soul has for Jesus Christ, the more lively and constant is its faith. The good thief seeing our Saviour expiring on the cross, without having committed any crime, and that he suffered so patiently, began to love him; and it was this love, joined to the divine lights, which made him believe that Jesus Christ was truly the Son of God, and inspired him with so much confidence in him, that he requested him to remember him when he should enter into his kingdom.

2. Faith is the foundation of charity; but it is

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charity that perfects faith. The more perfectly we love God, the more perfect is our faith. Charity causes faith to exist not only in the understanding, but also in the will. Those who believe speculatively, but not with their will, are those sinners who know the truth of faith, but who will not live according to the divine precepts; they have a very weak faith. If they had a lively faith, and believed that grace is the greatest of all blessings, and sin the greatest of all evils, they would change their lives. But, because they prefer the miserable goods of the earth to God, it must be said that they do not believe, or that they have a very weak faith. He, on the contrary, who has a practical, as well as a speculative faith, who is disposed to believe what God has revealed, because he loves God; such a person has perfect faith, and strives to conform his life to the truths, which he believes.

3. The defect of faith in sinners does not arise from the obscurity of faith; for although it was the will of God, that its truth should exceed our comprehension, that we might have the merit of faith, yet the truth of faith is so evident by those means and proofs that have been revealed to us, that to refuse our assent to them would not only be imprudent, but impious and foolish. The weakness of faith is, therefore, produced by a wicked life. He who despises God's friendship, that he may not be deprived of forbidden pleasures, would wish that there was no law to prohibit them, nor punishment to chastise them; he strives, therefore, to banish from his mind the thought of eternal truths, such as death, judgment, hell; these ideas terrify him, and imbitter his pleasures. He en-

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deavours to persuade himself that there is no soul, nor God, nor hell, that he may live and die like the brutes that have no law nor reason.

4. It was wicked lives that caused so many books and systems of materialists, indifferentists, deists, and naturalists, to be published. Some of them deny the existence of God; others his providence, saying, that after creating mankind God takes no further care of them, that it is a matter of indifference to him whether they love or offend him, whether they are lost or saved. Others allege that God is cruel, that he has created souls for hell, and that he induces them to sin in order that they may be damned, and accursed for ever in eternal fire.

5. O ingratitude and wickedness of men! God has created them in his mercy, to render them eternally happy: he has given them a profusion of lights and graces, in order that they may obtain eternal life: has redeemed them through an infinite love, by his painful sufferings; and those men force themselves to believe nothing, that the may live in vice! But in spite of their wishes these unhappy creatures can never deliver themselves from remorse, or the fear of the divine vengeance. I have published a work, called, *The truth of Faith;* in which I have proved the absurdity of those systems, which were invented by unbelievers. Would to God that they would renounce their vices and love Jesus Christ; they would no longer have any doubts, they would firmly believe all the revealed truth of God.

6. He that sincerely loves Jesus Christ always meditates on the eternal maxims and regulates his conduct by them: he is convinced, with the wise

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man, that all earthly grandeur is but smoke, dirt and folly; that the only happiness of the soul consists in loving its Creator and accomplishing his will; that man is nothing beyond what he is in the sight of God; that it will avail him nothing to gain the universe if he lose his soul; that all the goods of earth are unable to satisfy the heart of man, that God alone can satiate it, in a word that it must forsake every thing to acquire all things.

7. Other christians are not so perverse as those of whom we have spoken, who wish to believe nothing that they may freely live on in their vices. Others, I say, believe, but their faith is weak; they believe the mysteries and truths of revelation, but they do not believe them entirely. Jesus Christ has said, blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who suffer tribulations, who are persecuted and accused by men. But do those believe the gospel who say, blessed is he who has money: blessed is he who has nothing to suffer: blessed is he who amuses himself: miserable is he who is persecuted and ill-treated by men? Such persons do not believe, or they believe only a part of the gospel. He that believes it entirely considers it a great blessing to be poor, sick, despised and persecuted by the world. It is thus he believes and speaks, who has faith in the entire gospel, and who really loves Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my sweet Jesus! the life of my soul, I believe that you are the only good worthy of being loved. I believe that you love me too much, since you had such a desire to suffer all manner of tor-

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ments, and even death itself for my salvation. I believe there is no greater happiness in heaven or on earth, than to love you, and accomplish your will. I believe firmly, and I renounce everything, that I may entirely belong to you, and possess nothing but you. Assist me by the merits of your passion, and render me such as you wish me to be. Infallible truth! I believe you. Infinite mercy! I hope in you. Infinite goodness! I love you. Infinite love! who has given yourself entire to me in your passion, and in the adorable sacrament of the eucharist, I give myself entirely to you. Protect me by your intercession, O Mary! you who are the refuge of sinners, and my mother.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHARITY HOPES ALL THINGS.

He that loves Jesus Christ, hopes for everything from Jesus Christ.

1. HOPE increases charity, and charity increases hope. Confidence in the divine goodness increases our love for Jesus Christ. When we expect to receive any favour from a person, we begin to love him also. (St. Thomas ii. 2. q. 40. a 2.) The Lord does not wish us to place our confidence in creatures, (Ps. cxlv. 2.) and he curses him who places his trust in man, (Jer. xvii. 5.) because he is unwilling that creatures should be the object of our love. St. Vincent wishes that we should not depend on the protection of men, because God would in such a case, withdraw from us, just as

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our love for him increases in proportion as we place our confidence in him. (Ps. cxviii. 32.) Oh! what rapid progress in perfection does he make, whose heart is dilated with confidence in God! He not only runs, but flies; because, having placed all his hope in God, he ceases to be weak, and becomes strong with the strength of God, which is communicated to all those who hope in him. (Is. xl. 31.) The eagle approaches the sun in his flight; and the soul, supported by confidence in God, is detached from the earth, and united to him by love.

2. As hope serves to increase our love for God, so this love increases our hope, for charity renders us the adopted children of God. In the order of nature, we are the work of his hands, but in the supernatural order; that is, through the merits of Jesus Christ, we are made children of God, and partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet. i. 4.) And as charity renders us the children of God, it also makes us heirs to the kingdom of heaven. (Rom. viii. 17.) Now, it is the right of children to dwell in their father's house, and of heirs to receive their inheritance; charity, therefore, increases the hope of eternal goods, and hence those souls who truly love God never cease to pray for the coming of his kingdom.

3. Moreover, God loves him that loves. (Prov. viii. 17.) He loads with his favours him that seeks him. (Lament. iii. 25.) Hence, the more a person loves God, the more reason he has to hope in him. This hope produces in the saints an unalterable peace, which they preserve even in adversity, because, as they love God, and know how bountiful he is to those who love him, they place

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all their confidence, and find all their repose in him alone. This is the reason why the spouse in the Canticles was swimming in delights; for, as she loved nothing but her dearly beloved, she leant on him alone, and as she knew how well he repays those that love, she remained in peace and joy. (Cant. viii. 5.) Thus the wise man had good reason to say, that receiving charity, he had received every thing.

4. The first object of a christian hope is the possession of God in heaven. But let us not imagine that the hope of enjoying God in heaven is an obstacle to charity. These two virtues are inseparable. Charity is that precious treasure, which renders us friends of God. (Wisd. vii. 14.) Friendship is founded on a communication of goods, (St. Thomas,) and without such communication it does not exist. Jesus Christ said to his disciples, that because he had made them his friends, he had communicated all his secrets to them. John xv. 15.

5. St. Francis of Sales says, that if there were an infinite goodness; that is, a God to whom, (which is impossible,) we did not in any manner belong, and with whom we could have no union, no communication, we would undoubtedly esteem him more than ourselves, and might have the desire of loving him; but we would not love him, because love looks to an union. Charity is a friendship, and friendship has communication for its support, and union for its object. Hence, St. Thomas teaches, that charity does not exclude the desire of those rewards which God has prepared for us in heaven; but that it makes us consider the principal object our love, which is God,

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as constituting the bliss of heaven, for friendship requires that the soul should be in the possession of its friend.

6. Such is the reciprocal communication which is expressed by the spouse in the Canticles. (Cant. ii. 16.) In heaven, the soul gives itself entirely to God, and he bestows himself entirely to the soul, to the extent of its capacity, and according to the measure of its deserts. But the soul acknowledging its own nothingness, in comparison of the infinite loveliness of God, and seeing therefore that God infinitely more deserves to be loved by it, than it by God, is more anxious to please God than itself. It rejoices at the glory which is communicated to it by God; but it is in order to refer it afterwards to God himself, and to increase his glory as much as possible. At the sight of God in heaven the soul cannot prevent itself from loving him with all its might. God, on his part, cannot hate the soul that loves. But, if God could, (which he cannot) hate a soul that loves him, and if the soul of one of the blessed could exist without loving him, it would sooner suffer all the pains of hell with a permission to love him, than to enjoy all the delights of paradise without this privilege. The reason is, the soul knows that God is infinitely more deserving of love than itself, and therefore, has a much greater desire to love God, than to be loved by him.

7. Christian hope is defined by St. Thomas, as a certain attempt at eternal bliss. This certainty arises from the infallibility of God, who has promised eternal life to his faithful servants. Now, charity, by removing sin, removes also every obstacle to happiness: thus, the more charity we

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have, the more our hope is strengthened; and this, assuredly, will not be an obstacle to the purity of love, because love, says St. Denis, the Areopagite, naturally tends to our union with the object beloved. Love, said St. Augustine, is like a golden chain which links together the hearts of the person who loves, and the object of his love. And as this union cannot take place whilst they are at a distance, he that loves always desires the presence of the person whom he loves. The spouse, in the canticles, finding herself separated from her dearly-beloved, languishes, and prays her companions to acquaint him with what she endures, in order that he may console her by his presence. (Cant. iv. 8.) The soul which has a great love for Jesus Christ, cannot but desire, as long as it remains on earth, to go speedily to heaven to be united to the object of its love.

8. Hence, it follows, that the desire of going to enjoy God in heaven, not so much for the happiness of being loved there, as for the pleasure which is given to God by loving him, is a pure and perfect love. The pleasure which the blessed experience in loving God does not effect the purity of their love; but the saints are much more pleased with the love which they have for God, than with the satisfaction which they find in being loved. But it may be said, that love joined to a desire of reward is not a love of friendship, but concupiscence. I answer that we must distinguish temporal rewards, promised by man, from the reward of heaven, which God has promised to those who love him. The rewards of men are distinct from their persons, for they never bestow themselves, but only their goods, whereas the chief re-

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compense which God bestows on the blessed is himself. (Gen. xv. 1.) Hence, to desire heaven, is to desire God, who is our last end.

9. But, if God revealed to a soul, that it would be blotted out from the book of life, should this soul be satisfied with conforming to the will of God? No, replies St. Thomas, and the soul would even commit sin by doing so, because it would be consenting to live in the state of sin—a state contrary to the end for which God created it; because God has not created souls for hell, where they would hate him, but for heaven, where they would never cease to love him. Hence, he does not will the death of a sinner—but rather that he be converted and saved. The same saint adds, that it is not the will of our Lord, that any one should be damned, except by sin; and that therefore, by consenting to its condemnation, it would not act conformably to the will of God, but to that of sin. (S. Thom. de ver. q. 3. a. 8.) But, if God revealed to this soul the decree of its damnation, on account of his foreknowledge of its sin, ought it then to consent to it? No, still replies St. Thomas, because it should look on such revelation as not an irrevocable decree, but as a threat, which would be carried into effect only, if it persisted in sin.

10. Let us remove from our minds such fatal thoughts, which serve only to chill our confidence and love. Let us love Jesus Christ as much as we can in this world. Let us unceasingly sigh after the hour, which will reunite us to him in heaven—to love him there perfectly. The principal object of our hope should be to attain heaven, and to love him there with all our strength.

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(Luke x. 27.) St. Thomas says, that man cannot perfectly fulfil on earth the precept of loving God. None but Jesus Christ, who was a Man-God, and Mary, who was full of grace, and free from original sin, observed it perfectly. As for us, miserable children of Adam, our love for God is always mingled with some imperfection. It is only in heaven, where we shall behold God face to face, that we shall love him, and be under the necessity of loving him with all our strength.

11. Hence, the object of our thoughts, desires, and hopes, should be to hasten to possess God in heaven, in order to love him with all our strength, and to rejoice at his happiness. The greatest pleasure which the saints enjoy in heaven is to know the immense felicity of their dearly-beloved Master, because they love God infinitely more than they love themselves. Each of them in consequence of the love which he has for God, would be content to sacrifice all his happiness, and suffer all manner of torments, sooner than God should be deprived of the least portion of the bliss which he enjoys, if such a thing were possible. Their paradise, then, consists in the reflection, that God is infinitely happy, and that his happiness is eternal. It is thus we should understand what the Saviour says to the soul, in putting her in possession of heaven: Enter into the joy of thy Lord. (Matt. xxx. 21.) He does not desire joy to enter into the soul, but tells the soul to enter into the joy of God, because it is the joy of God which constitutes that of the blessed, so that the wealth, the riches, and the happiness of God, will be the wealth, riches, and happiness of the blessed.

12. From the moment a soul enters into heaven,

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and sees the glory and infinite beauty of God unveiled, it finds itself languishing and consuming with love; it loses itself, and remains immersed, as it were, in the infinite goodness of God; it then forgets itself, and being inebriated with divine love thinks of nothing but loving God. (Ps. xxxv. 9.) A person in a state of intoxication thinks no longer of himself. In like manner, the soul of the blessed thinks only of loving and pleasing God; it desires to possess him entirely, and it really possesses him without the fear of ever losing him; it desires to give itself entirely to him, it really does so every moment and without reserve. God shews it his love, and will continue to do so for all eternity.

13. In heaven the soul remains entirely united to God, and with all its strength, loves him with a complete love, which although finite, as a creature is not susceptible of infinite love, is yet such as to satisfy it altogether, so as to leave it nothing more to desire. God on his part, communicates and unites himself to the soul, by filling it with himself, as far as it is capable, and according to its merits. He unites himself to it, not only by means of his gifts, his lights, and his loving attractions, as he does to man in this life, but he unites himself to it by his own essence. As fire penetrates iron, and seems to transform it entirely into itself, so does God penetrate the soul, and fill it with himself, in such a manner, that though it does not cease to exist, yet it is so replenished by God, and buried in the immense ocean of the divine substance, that it finds itself almost annihilated and deprived of existence. This is the blessing which the apostle wished his disciples. Eph. iii. 19.

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14. Such is the ultimate end which the goodness of the Lord wishes us to attain in the other life; and our soul will never be entirely at peace, until it be perfectly united to God in heaven. It is true that those who love Jesus Christ enjoy peace in conforming to the divine will; but they cannot enjoy perfect repose in this life, because such repose is obtained only with our last end, which is to see God face to face, and to be consumed with divine love. As long as the soul is not in possession of this end, it is restless, it sighs and mourns. Is. xxxviii. 17.

15. Yes, O my God! I live in peace in this vale of tears, because such is your divine will; but I cannot help experiencing an inexpressible bitterness when I reflect that I am not yet perfectly united to you, who are my centre, my rest, and my all. The saints, although burning with the love of God, did nothing whilst on earth, but sigh after their blessed country. (Ps. cxix. 5. xvi. 5. Phil. i. 23.) The good which I expect is so great, says St. Francis of Assisium, that pains seem pleasures in my eyes. These are so many acts of perfect charity. The highest degree of charity to which a soul can arrive during this life, is to desire ardently to go to be united with God, and to possess him in heaven. (S. Thom. ii. 2. q. 24. a. 9.) But the happiness of heaven, as we have already observed, does not consist so much in the joy which God gives the soul, as in the joy which the soul feels at the happiness of God, who is loved by the blessed more than themselves.

16. The greatest punishment which the souls in purgatory suffer, is the desire they have of possessing God; this punishment particularly affects

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those souls, who, in this life, had only a faint desire of paradise. Cardinal Bellarmin says, that there is a place in purgatory called the *prison of honor*, *Carcer honoratus*, where the souls endure no punishment of sense, but the privation of the vision of God alone. Many examples of this kind of punishment are related by St. Gregory, Ven. Bede, St. Vincent, Ferrer, and St. Brigit; this punishment is imposed, not for sins committed, but for having had little desire of heaven during life. Many souls aspire to perfection, yet without a desire of quitting the earth, in order to be united to God. But as eternal life is an infinitely precious benefit, which Jesus Christ has merited for us by his death, God after death punishes those souls for their faint desire of heaven during life.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My God! you have created me for heaven, and it was to open it for me that you redeemed me from hell. Nevertheless, I have often offended you; I have renounced the bliss which you have prepared for me, and was satisfied with seeing myself condemned to hell; but your infinite mercy has, I trust, forgiven my past ingratitudes, after having so often rescued me from hell. Ah! my Jesus, why have I not always been faithful to you? Why have I not always loved you! My only comfort is, that I have still time to do so. I love you, O dearly beloved of my soul. I love you with my whole heart, and more than myself. I know that you desire my salvation, in order that I may go to love you for ever in heaven. I thank you for your goodness, and I beseech you to grant

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me the grace to love you exceedingly for the rest of my life, that I may love you for ever in the next. Ah! my Saviour, when shall I be out of the danger of losing you, and so consumed with love at the sight of your infinite beauty, as to be under the necessity of loving you? O sweet, O happy, O amiable necessity! which will deliver me from all fear of displeasing you, and will compel me to love with all my strength! It is true that my conscience tells me, I cannot pretend to obtain heaven; but your merits, O my divine Redeemer! are all my hope. O Mary! Queen of Heaven! your intercession is most powerful with God—I also hope in you.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHARITY ENDURES ALL THINGS.

He that ardently loves Jesus Christ, does not cease to love him in the midst of desolations, and when he is tempted.

1. THE sufferings which give most pain to the souls that love God in this life, are neither poverty, nor sickness, nor disgrace, nor persecutions, but temptations and interior desolations. When a soul lives in the fear and love of God, pains, ignominies, and the ill treatment of men, are a consolation, rather than affliction, because it is thereby enabled to give proofs of its love to God. These events, like wood in a conflagration, serve to increase its love for God; but to see itself exposed to temptation, to the loss of grace, or to fear from desolation, that it has already forfeited it—

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these are the bitter sufferings to him who loves the heart of Jesus Christ. Nothing but love can enable him to endure them patiently, or keep himself in the way of perfection. These trials are crucibles, which purify and impart perfection to souls.

I.—Temptations.

To a soul that loves Jesus Christ, no suffering is greater than temptations. All other evils tend to unite it more closely to God, when it receives them with resignation. But temptations expose it to the danger of losing Jesus Christ, and are consequently, more severe than all other torments. We should know, however, that temptations never comes from God, but from the devil, or our own evil inclinations. (James i. 13.) Yet the Lord sometimes permits that souls, which are dear to him, should be tempted with some violence, in order that they may better understand their own weakness, and the necessity of grace to prevent them from falling. When a soul is favored by God with interior consolations, it seems to be sufficiently strong to resist the suggestions of the enemy, and to undertake every thing for the glory of God. But when under a violent temptation, it sees itself within two inches of the precipice, and ready to fall into it; perceiving the weakness of its nature, it knows that it could not resist without the assistance of God. This is precisely what happened to St. Paul, who says, that the Lord suffered him to be tempted, in order that he might not take pride in those revelations with which he had been favored. 2 Cor. xii. 7.

3. God permits us to be tempted, that we may

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be more detached from the things of earth, and conceive a more ardent desire of going to behold him in heaven. Devout souls, seeing themselves assailed in all times and places by so many enemies, become weary of life. (Ps. cxix. 5.) They sigh after the hour when they can say: The snare is broken; we are delivered. (Ps. cxxiii. 7.) These souls wish to flee towards God, but a snare or thread retains them on the earth, where they are subject to temptations until the hour of their departure from this world. This is the reason why those souls who love Jesus Christ, sigh after death, which will deliver them from the danger of losing God.

4. God also permits us to be tempted, in order to increase our merits, as was said to Tobias—(Job xii. 13.) When, therefore, a person is tempted, he should hope that God loves him, instead of fearing that he is angry. The devil, in order to deceive some weak souls, makes them believe that temptations are real sins. It is not by evil thoughts that we lose God, but by the consent which may be given to them. No matter how violent the suggestions of the enemy may be, no matter how impure may be the phantoms that cross our imaginations, provided they be against our will, instead of defiling our souls, they render them more pure, more strong, and more agreeable in the sight of God. St. Bernard says, that every time we overcome a temptation, we gain a new crown. Even should a wicked thought continue to distract us, let us not lose our peace; it is enough that we abhor and endeavour to banish it.

5. God is faithful, and he does not suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength. (1 Cor. x. 13.)

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He, therefore, that resists temptation, not only loses nothing, but gains very much. It is thus that the Lord often suffers those souls that are dearest to him to be assailed with the most violent temptations, in order that they may acquire more merit on earth, and more glory in heaven. Stagnant water is soon corrupted; and in like manner the soul without temptation is exposed to danger from some vain confidence, which it may take in its own merit. Thinking it has arrived at perfection, it ceases to fear, it abates in fervor in prayer, and labours only very little to ensure its salvation. But when it is disturbed by temptation, and sees itself in danger of committing sin, it has recourse to the Lord, and to his divine mother; it renews its determination to die rather than offend God; it humbles itself and takes refuge in the arms of the divine mercy. By this means, as is proved by experience, it acquires more strength, and is united more closely to God

6. Nevertheless, we must not desire temptations, but rather pray to God to be delivered from them, and particularly from those under which we would fall. This is what we beg every day in the *Our Father*. But when God permits us to be tempted, let us not be disturbed by the evil thoughts which present themselves. Let us hope in God, implore his assistance, and he will never fail to give us strength to resist. Let us commit ourselves to God and fear nothing, because if he suffers us to be exposed to temptations, he will not retire from us, and leave us to fall. S. Aug. Conf. viii. 11.

7. Let us now consider the means we should employ to overcome temptations. The masters of a spiritual life lay down several. For my part,

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I shall in this place, speak only of prayer, which is the most certain of all these means. When, therefore, we are tempted, let us have recourse to God, and say to him, with humility and confidence: O Lord, assist me. Help me without delay. Thus, prayer alone is enough to make us victorious, even if all the devils in hell were opposed to us, because God is infinitely stronger than all the demons. God knows that we cannot of ourselves resist temptations, and therefore, when we are in danger of falling, he is obliged to give us strength to overcome them, if we ask him for it. Cardinal Gatti. Theol. tom. ii. t. 6. q. 2.

8. How can we doubt of the assistance of Jesus Christ, after so many promises on his part? (Matt. xi. 28.) Are you assaulted by temptation? says the Lord; come to me and I will assist you. (Ps. xlix. 15.) Are you encompassed by enemies? Call me to your assistance. I will deliver you from their hands, and you will offer me praise. (Isaiah lvi. 9.) Then, you shall call the Lord to your aid, and he will hear you. You will cry out: hasten, O Lord, to assist me: and he will answer: behold I am here—I am ready to succour you. (Eccles. ii. 12.) Has the Lord ever despised prayers that were addressed to him? David was so certain that he could conquer his enemies by prayer, that he said: I will call upon the Lord, and he will deliver me from my enemies. (Ps. xvii. 4.) He knew that God was nigh to him that prays. (Ps. cxliv. 18.) And St. Paul adds, that the Lord is bounteous to all those who invoke him. Rom. x. 12.

9. If we always called upon God in time of temptation, we would not sin. But we wish to

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satisfy our passions, and prefer the pleasures of a moment to God, who is our infinite good. Thus, we commit sin, because we will it; for experience proves, that he who has recourse to God, does not sin, and that he who fails to invoke him will assuredly fall, and especially under a temptation against chastity. Solomon said, that in his temptations he had recourse to God, because he knew that he could not be chaste, unless God gave him that grace. (Wisdom viii. 21.) When a person is tempted against chastity or faith, he should not strive to combat it directly; but should from the very beginning indirectly reject it, by an act of the love of God, or of contrition, and by occupying his mind with some indifferent matter, which may distract it. Thus, from the moment an evil thought surprises us, we should banish it immediately, shut our hearts against it, without waiting to consider what it is, and treat it like a spark, which has fallen on our clothes.

10. But, if the impure temptation has already made an impression on our minds and senses, we must implore help from the Lord by invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary, which have a particular virtue against these temptations. (St. Jerome Ep. xxii. *ad Eust.*) When a child sees the wolf he runs to throw himself into the arms of his father and mother, and then believes he is safe. Let us do the same, says St. Francis of Sales. At the sight of temptation let us hasten to Jesus and Mary, and let us do so at once, without losing time to reason with the temptation. We read in the book of the sayings of the Fathers, that St. Pacomius one day heard a devil boasting of having frequently made a religious fall into sin,

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who, when he tempted him, gave him a hearing, and did not apply to God. He also heard him complain, that he could never succeed against another religious, because the moment he tempted him, he had recourse to God, and was by this means always victorious.

11. If the temptation continues let us take great care not to disturb or fret ourselves. The devil would take advantage of this uneasy moment to make us fall. But humbly resigning ourselves to the will of God, which permits the temptation, let us say to him: Lord I have deserved in punishment of my sins, to be exposed to such a temptation as this. But I beg you to assist me, and not suffer me to fall. Let us, then, invoke Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation shall continue. It is likewise good at such a time to renew our resolution to suffer all manner of torments, and even death itself, sooner than offend God, without ceasing, meantime to recommend ourselves to him. When the temptation is so strong that there is danger of consenting to it, we should redouble our prayers, have recourse to the holy sacrament, cast ourselves at the feet of the crucifix, or some image of the Blessed Virgin, pray with more fervor, and implore assistance with sighs and groans. It is true, that God is ready to hear him that prays, and that it is the disposition of God, and not our efforts, which will give us strength to resist; but he sometimes wishes that we should begin by making some attempt ourselves; he will then supply our weakness, and make us obtain the victory.

12. We should, during the temptation, frequently make the sign of the cross upon our fore-

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head and breast, and disclose our state to our spiritual father. St. Philip Neri said, that a temptation which is disclosed is half subdued. It is an opinion generally received by all theologians, even by the rigorists, that persons who have led a regular life for a long time, whenever they are not certain of having committed a grievous fault, should be persuaded that they have not lost the grace of God; for it is morally impossible, that a will which has been for a long time confined in a good resolution, should suddenly change, and consent to a mortal sin, without clearly perceiving it. Mortal sin is so hideous a monster, that it cannot, without being perceived, enter into a soul which has abhorred it for a long time. This is what I have proved in my *Moral Theology*, book vi. n. 476. St. Teresa said: No one is lost without knowing it, and no one can be deceived against his will.

13. But I repeat, that the most efficacious and necessary of all remedies, is prayer and perseverance in prayer, as long as the temptation remains. It often happens, that the Lord has reserved the victory not for the first, but the second, the third, and even the fourth prayer. In a word, be persuaded that all our happiness depends on prayer. A change of life is the result of prayer; a victory over temptations is gained by prayer; divine love, perfection, perseverance, and salvation are obtained by prayer.

14. Let no one be surprised at seeing me so often recommend the use of prayer, with its importance and continual necessity, in my works. I only fear that I have not sufficiently dwelt upon it. I know that the devil does not cease both day

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and night, to lay snares for our fall; I know that with the divine assistance, we are able to resist him, and it is for this reason the apostle exhorts us to be clothed in the armour of God. (Ephes vi. 11, 12.) Now what is this armour? (Ibid 18.) Continual and fervent prayer to God for his assistance. We are constantly reminded in the Old and New Testament of the necessity of prayer: Call upon me, and I will deliver you. (Ps. xlix. 15.) Cry to me, and I will hear you. (Job xxxiii. 3.) We should always pray, and never cease. (Luke xviii. 1.) Ask, and it shall be given you. (Matt. vii. 7.) Watch and pray. (John iv. 2.) Pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. v. 17.) I think, therefore, that I have not spoken too much of prayer.

15. I could wish that preachers, confessors, and the authors of spritual books would make prayer the principal subject of their discourses and advices. Their silence in this respect seems to me to be a just punishment of our crimes. Sermons, meditations, communions, and mortifications, are of acknowledged value in a spiritual life; but in spite of all those means, we will fall, if we do not pray to God at the time of temptation. If we wish to be saved then, let us pray, and especially in temptations. Let us have recourse to our Saviour, and ask him not only for strength to overcome temptation, and for perseverance, in grace, but also for the grace of praying always. Let us address ourselves also to Mary, the dispensatrix of graces, as St. Bernard assures us, it is the will of God that we should receive no grace, but what passes through the hands of Mary.

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Jesus, my divine Redeemer, I hope that through your merits, my sins are forgiven, and that I will thank you for ever in heaven for this mercy. I acknowledge that if I have had the misfortune to sin, and to relapse, it was because I did not pray for perseverance. I now implore this virtue from you, O my God! Never suffer me to be separated from you. I form a resolution of always imploring this favour, and particularly when I shall be tempted to offend you. But what will resolutions and promises avail me, if you do not give me the grace to fly to you in my necessities? Ah! it is through the merits of your passion that I ask you this grace: do not refuse it to me. Mary, my Queen and my Mother! I beseech you, by your love for Jesus, to obtain for me the grace to have recourse always to your divine Son, and to yourself, even unto death.

II.—Desolations.

16. We are deceived, says St. Francis of Sales, when we wish to estimate devotion by the consolations which we experience in the service of the Lord. True devotion consists in a firm determination to do every thing that is pleasing to God. It is by aridities that God is most intimately united to the soul: attachment to our inordinate inclinations is an obstacle to a real union with God. When God wishes to attract a soul to his perfect love, he endeavours to wean it from all attachment to earthly things. For this reason, he gradually deprives it of the pleasures, the goods,

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and the honors of the world: of its friends, its parents, and its health. He thus weans it from the creature, that it may bestow all its affections on its God.

17. With this object in view, God, in order to give the soul a relish for spiritual things, makes her enjoy in the beginning, many interior consolations, accompanied with an abundance of tears. By the attraction of these comforts, their soul is weaned from the pleasures of sense, and even devotes itself to penances, and mortifications, to fastings, and hair-cloths, and disciplines. The advice of a prudent director is then required to moderate this ardour, and to refuse at least a part of those mortifications, for which permission is asked, and which might be injurious to health. When the devil perceives that the soul has given herself to God, and that she receives those consolations that are usual with beginners, he suggests all these penitential works, in order that they may destroy health, and together with health, the use not only of penitent works, but of prayer, of communion, of all the exercises of piety, and thus induce her to return to her former disorders. The duty of the director in such a case, is to refuse permission to practice those austerities, and to reccommend interior mortifications—such as to suffer insults and crosses with patience, to obey superiors, to abstain from all curiosity in sight and hearing, and to promise that when the penitent is well trained in these interior mortifications, that he will permit the use of exterior. But it should not be said that exterior mortifications are of none or very little use. Interior mortifications are more necessary for perfection, but exterior

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have their advantages also. St. Vincent of Paul says, that he who does not practice exterior mortifications will never be mortified either interiorly or exteriorly. St. John of the Cross adds, that we should not trust a director who would despise bodily austerities, even if he were a worker of miracles.

18. But to return to our subject: the soul which begins to devote itself to God, weans itself gradually from creatures, and unites itself to God, be experiencing the sweetness of these sensible consolations. But as it does so, more from the attraction of this sweetness than a real desire of pleasing the Lord, it falsely imagines that the more comfort it feels from its devotions, the more it loves God. The consequence is, that when it is made quit those pious exercises, in which it found so much delight, for the purpose of discharging those obligations which obedience, charity, or duty impose upon it, it is fretted and disturbed; for such is the weakness of man; he seeks his own satisfaction in all his actions. When he no longer experiences the same delights in these exercises, he abandons them, or at least abridges them, and by shortening them from day to day, at last gives them up altogether. This is what happens to many souls: obedient to the voice of God, they enter on the way of perfection, and make some progress in it as long as these spiritual consolations remain; but when the latter disappear, they abandon everything, and resume their former way of life. We must, therefore, be firmly convinced that the love of God, and perfection, do not consist in interior consolations and sweetness, but in the conquest of self-love, in order

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to follow the will of God alone. St. Francis of Sales says, that God is as amiable when he sends us afflictions, as when he fills us with consolations.

19. As long as we experience consolations, it is no great proof of virtue, to renounce sensual pleasures, and to bear affronts and crosses with patience; for this patience very frequently proceeds from these consolations, and not from a real love of God. Hence, the Lord, in order to strengthen the soul in virtue, retires from her and deprives her of all these consolations, that she may be weaned from that self-love which delighted in them. Thus, instead of finding pleasure as she did before, in acts of confidence and love, she feels nought but irksomeness and pain. She is tired of all devout exercises—of prayers, of spiritual reading, of communion—and what is more, they are attended by nothiug but fears and darkness. It appears to her, that every thing is lost. She constantly sees that she has not prayed as she ought. She begins her prayers over again every moment—she is afflicted, and believes that God refuses to hear them.

20. Under such circumstances, we should act in the following manner: Far from rejecting those divine consolations as some false mystics pretend, we should receive them with gratitude, taking care at the same time, not to relish them, or feel complacency in them. Such complacency is called a spiritual gluttony by St. John of the Cross; it is not pleasing to God. Hence, let us banish it from our minds, and be careful not to think that the Lord has favoured us with consolations, because we are better conducted than others. Such a thought would make him leave us altogether,

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and abandon us in our misery. These spiritual consolations are gifts more precious than all the riches and honours of this world. Let us therefore be grateful to God for them: but at the same time far from feeling any satisfaction in them, let us humble ourselves, and think of our past sins. Let us reflect, that those graces are the pure effects of God's bounty, and that he sends them, perhaps for the purpose of preparing us to suffer some great tribulations. Let us then pledge ourselves to suffer all kinds of interior and exterior pains, sickness, and persecutions, by saying to God: O Lord! behold me—dispose of me entirely, and of every thing that belongs to me; grant me the grace to love you, and to accomplish your holy will—this is all I ask.

21. But a soul that is morally certain of being in the grace of God, even though she were deprived at the same time of the pleasures of the world, and heavenly comforts, still remains in peace, because she knows that she loves God, and that she is loved in return. But God, wishing to purify her more and more, and to deprive her of all sensible satisfaction, in order to unite her entirely to himself by a pure and perfect love, places her sometimes in the crucible of desolation, which is the bitterest of all interior and exterior sufferings, covers her spirit with so thick a darkness, that she no longer knows whether she is in the state of grace or not, and that she imagines she will not be able to recover God. God sometimes permits that she should have strong temptations of impurity, accompanied by motions of the inferior nature, or with thoughts contrary to faith, hope, and charity; nay of hatred against God by

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whom she imagines she is abandoned. As therefore, on the one hand, the suggestions of the devil are strong, and concupiscence violent, and on the other, that the soul, though she willingly resists them, yet cannot in so great an obscurity, sufficiently distinguish whether she has sufficiently resisted them or not. All these circumstances make her fear that she has been unfaithful in these various temptations, and at the same time to have lost God, and forfeited his grace. She goes farther: she believes that she is utterly ruined, that she no longer loves God, and that she has incurred his hatred. The saints themselves have not been exempt from similar desolation. St. Teresa says, that she had experienced them—she says that solitude, far from lessening the evil, served only to increase it, and that prayer seemed to her to be a hell.

22. These desolations should not terrify a soul that loves, and much less her director. These sensual agitations, these temptations against the theological virtues, are nothing but mere apprehensions, torments of the soul, attempts of the devil, and by no means voluntary acts, and consequently, not sinful. The soul that truly loves Jesus Christ resists, and never consents to these suggestions; but on account of the darkness which surrounds her, she remains in doubt and confusion, and as grace does not manifest itself to her in a sensible manner, she is in fear and affliction. But if you wish to know the real situation of such a soul, ask her even in the height of her desolation, whether she would commit one single venial sin, deliberately, and she will reply without hesitation, that she is ready to suffer, not one but a

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thousand deaths, sooner than offend God in such a manner.

23. Hence, it is one thing to do a good act, such as to resist a temptation, to hope in God, to love him, and to will what he will,—and another, to know when this good act is really performed. This knowledge of a good action makes us experience an interior satisfaction; but the fruit and merit of a good action consist in its performance. It in this manner God satisfies himself, and deprives the soul of the knowledge of the good action which she has performed, in order to deprive her of the satisfaction, which in reality adds nothing to the act that is performed, since the Lord is more concerned for our advantage than for our satisfaction. St. John of the Cross wrote as follows, to console a person in this melancholy situation: 'You have never been in a better state than at present, because you were never so humbled, so detached from the world, and so abject in your own estimation as you are now. You were never farther from seeking yourself, or your own will. In a word, do not believe that we are most beloved by God at the time when we feel most interior consolation, for perfection does not consist in these consolations, but in a mortification of our own, and a perfect conformity to the divine will.

24. In this state of desolation the soul should not listen to the devil, who tells her that God has forsaken her, nor give up her prayers on that account. This is a snare which the devil lays for her, to drag her into the precipice; it is by aridities and temptations, says St. Teresa, that the Lord tries the fidelity of those who love him.

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Even should those aridities continue during our whole life, we should not abandon prayer, because the time will come when we will be most amply repaid for all those sufferings. We should then humble ourselves at the reflection, that we deserve to be treated thus, on account of our past sins, and resign ourselves entirely to God's will, saying to him, Behold me, O Lord; if you wish me to remain in desolation and affliction all my life, and even for eternity, grant me your grace, make me love you, and then dispose of me as you please.

25. Do not uselessly fatigue yourself, nor increase your uneasiness and trouble by desiring the assurance that you are in the state of grace, that this is only a trial, and not an abandonment by God, because God does not then wish that you should have this knowledge. He does not wish it for your greater good, in order to humble you, and that you may redouble your prayers and acts of confidence in his divine mercy. You wish to see, and God wishes that you should not. Moreover, St. Francis of Sales says, that the resolution never to consent to any sin, whether great or small, is a proof of one's being in the grace of God. But, even this is a thing which cannot be clearly known when one is in a state of profound desolation; we should not then affect to have evidence of the thing we desire; it is enough to desire by the will, and to resign ourselves into the arms of the divine goodness. O how agreeable to God are such acts of resignation and confidence in the midst of darkness and desolation! Let us, then, place all our confidence in God, because, as St. Teresa says, he loves us much more than we do ourselves.

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26. Be comforted then ye cherished souls of God, you who are sincerely resolved to belong entirely to God, and who see yourselves deprived at the same time of all consolation. Your desolation is a proof that you are greatly beloved by God, and that he has prepared you a place in heaven, where the consolations are abundant and eternal. Be assured that the more you are afflicted in this life, the more consolations you will receive in the other. (Ps. xciii. 19.) St. Jean Frances de Chantal had to sustain during forty-one years, terrible assaults, on the part of hell, interior pains, temptations, fears of being out of God's favour; nay, of being entirely forsaken by him. Her afflictions were so continual and so great, that she said nothing but the thought of death gave her any comfort. "The enemy attacks me with so much fury, that I know not on what side to turn. I sometimes think I am going to lose my patience, and every thing else. The temptations are so violent, that I would freely give my life to be delivered from them. Sometimes they go so far as to deprive me of the use of food and sleep."

27. Her temptations still increased during the last eight or nine years of her life, and became more violent. Mother de Chatel said, that the holy Mother de Chantal suffered an intense martyrdom, both day and night, at the time of prayer, of labour, and even at rest, so that she felt the greatest compassion for this saint. She was tempted against all the virtues, except chastity. The devil excited in her doubts, perplexities, and contradictions, without number. Sometimes God deprived her of his lights, and appeared quite dis-

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pleased with her, as if he were going to banish her from his presence, so that in the height of her terror, she turned her looks elsewhere to find some relief: but as she found no comfort any where else, she was obliged to turn to God, and to abandon herself to his mercy. She seemed to be on the point of yielding every moment to the force of these temptations. Although God did not cease to assist her, she imagined that he had abandoned her, seeing that prayer, pious reading, communion and other spiritual exercises no longer afforded her any pleasure, but fatigue and anguish. All her resource in this state of abandonment was to look upon God, and to submit to his will.

28. In all my abandonments, said the saint, I find a new cross in the simple life which I lead, and my inability to act is an addition to my cross. She seemed to be like a sick person full of pains, and incapable of turning or relieving herself in any manner without being able to tell her disease, or to see whether what was brought to her was medicine or poison. She added, shedding a torrent of tears, I seem to have neither faith, hope, nor love of God. Nevertheless, she always preserved a serene countenance, and great sweetness in conversation; she had her eyes constantly fixed on God, and reposed entirely in the bosom of the divine will. Her director, St. Francis of Sales, who knew how precious her soul was in the sight of God, spoke of her thus: Her head was like a deaf musician, who, although he sings remarkably well, can derive no pleasure from it. He wrote to the saint in these terms: You should serve your Saviour purely through the love of his will, when deprived of all consolation, and in the midst of

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these deluges of sadness and terror. It is in this manner we arrive at sanctity.

The saints are those chosen stones, which, as the church sings, being shaped by the blows of the chisel, that is by temptations, fears, doubts, perplexities, and other interior and exterior pains, become fit to be placed in thrones in the kingdom of heaven.

Scalpri salubris ictibus,
Et tunsione plurima,
Fabri polita malleo
Hanc saxa molem construunt,
Aptisque juncta nexibus
Locantur in fastigio.*

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Jesus, my hope and my love! I do not desire that you should give me consolation and delights. Reserve them for innocent souls, who have always loved you. As for my part, I am a sinner. I do not deserve them, and I do not ask them. All I ask is that I may love you, and always accomplish your holy will; dispose of me entirely with regard to every thing else. I have deserved the greatest punishments and afflictions for my past sins. I have on their account deserved hell, where I should be condemned to eternal grief and suffering, without being even able to love you. Ah! it is from this last punishment alone that I beseech you to deliver me. You deserve an infinite love. You have by your favours placed me under an obligation of loving you. No; I could not exist

* Hymn for the Dedication of a Church.

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without loving you. I love you, O my sovereign good! I love you with my whole heart, and more than myself; I love you, and I wish to love nothing but you. This good disposition is an effect of your grace. Accomplish your own work. Be my support, even unto death; do not abandon me to myself. Give me grace to overcome temptations, and particularly to subdue myself; and, in order that I may succeed in this, grant that I may recommend myself to you by continual prayer. I desire to belong entirely to you. I consecrate to you my body, my soul, my will, my liberty. I desire to live only for you, and for you alone, O my Creator, my Redeemer, my Love and my All! I wish to become a saint at any sacrifice; and I hope in your goodness, O Mary! it is in you I hope; your intercession is most powerful with God. Through your love for Jesus Christ, I beseech you to assist me by your intercession, and conduct me to the haven of salvation.

THE END.

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CONTENTS.

Page

CHAP. I.

How Jesus Christ deserves to be loved, on account of the love which he has shewn us in his Passion 6
Affections and Prayers 14

CHAP. II.

How Jesus Christ deserves to be loved by us, on account of the love which he has shewn us in the institution of the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar 16
Affections and Prayers 23

CHAP. III.

On the great confidence which we should derive from the consideration of the love which Jesus Christ has shewn us, and all his benefits . . 24
Affections and Prayers 30

CHAP. IV.

On our obligation to love Jesus Christ . . . 31
Affections and Prayers 38

CHAP. V.

He that loves Jesus Christ, loves sufferings . . 39
Affections and Prayers 48

Digitized by Google

Page

CHAP. VI.

He that loves Jesus Christ, practices meekness . 49
Affections and Prayers 55

CHAP. VII.

The soul that loves Jesus Christ does not envy the great ones of this world, but only those who love Jesus Christ more than itself 56
Affections and Prayers 62

CHAP. VIII.

He who loves Jesus Christ, shuns tepidity, and seeks perfection. The means of attaining it are: 1. The desire. 2. The resolution to attain it. 3. Meditation. 4. Communion. 5. Prayer . . 63
Affections and Prayers 86

CHAP. IX.

He that loves Jesus Christ does not pride himself on his good qualities, but humbles himself, and takes a pleasure in seeing himself humbled . . 87
Affections and Prayers 94

CHAP. X.

He that loves Jesus Christ, desires nothing but Jesus Christ 95
Affections and Prayers 98

CHAP. XI.

He that loves Jesus Christ, wishes to be disengaged from every creature 99
Affections and Prayers 112

Digitized by Google

Page

CHAP. XII.

He that loves Jesus Christ, is never angry with his neighbour 113
Affections and Prayers 119

CHAP. XIII.

He that loves Jesus Christ, desires nothing but what Jesus Christ wills 120
On Obedience 128
Affections and Prayers 132

CHAP. XIV.

He that loves Jesus Christ, suffers everything for Jesus Christ, and particularly sickness, poverty, and insults 133
Affections and Prayers 146

CHAP. XV.

He that loves Jesus Christ, believes everything which he has spoken 147
Affections and Prayers 150

CHAP. XVI.

He that loves Jesus Christ, hopes for everything from Jesus Christ 151
Affections and Prayers 160

CHAP. XVII.

He that ardently loves Jesus Christ, does not cease to love him in the midst of desolations, and when he is tempted 161
Temptations 162
Affections and Prayers 170
Desolations . . . . . ib
Affections and Prayers 180

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